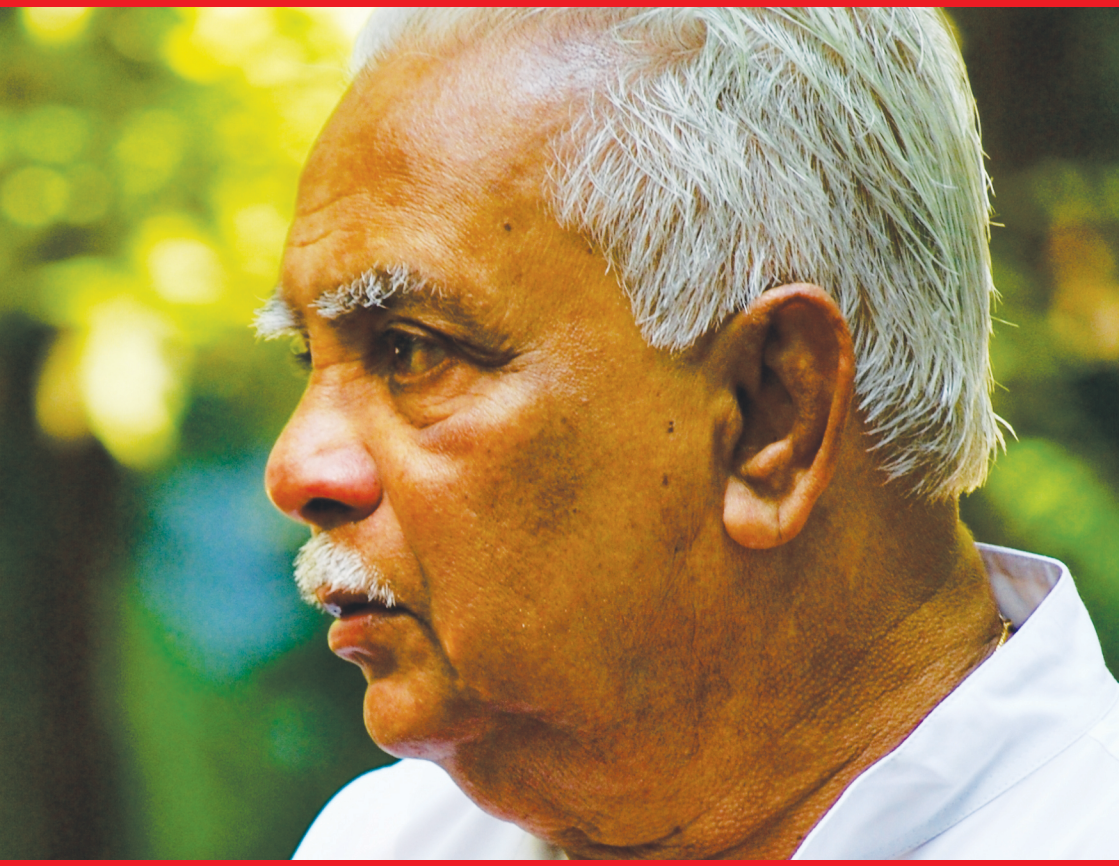
A.T. Ariyaratne

Collected Works

Volume X



Edited by

Yamuna Balasooriya

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National Library of Sri Lanka - Catalouge - in - Publication Data

A.T. Ariyaratne Collected Works
Volume X
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Cover Design/Page Layout : K.S.A. Samarasekara
Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, 2020

ISBN 978-955-599-513-9

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PREFACE

It is a great privilege and honour to be given this opportunity of compiling a collection of Dr. A T Ariyaratne's speeches delivered during the last seven years, on his 89th birthday which falls on 5th November, 2020. I am particularly honoured, not only because the present Volume, which is the tenth in the series, will be the final volume, but also because it is something that Dr. Ariyaratne yearned to do for a long time. I was determined to fulfill his desire and commenced proceedings towards its publication immediately. Sourcing the finances for this proved to be more difficult than anticipated due to the coronavirus pandemic. Most of the speeches reproduced here did not have a soft copy and had to be re-typed. Whilst researching for this Volume, I gained immense knowledge and insight into the great community leader who has earned several international awards for his yeoman services to the rural poor in Sri Lanka spanning over six decades.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Dr. A T Ariyaratne, our beloved 'Loku Sir', a very happy birthday. May you live a very long, healthy and peaceful life!

Many thanks to Mr. Quincy Saul for patiently correcting this collection and for writing the introduction.

My gratitude also goes to Ms. Pushpa Ranjani and to the team at Vishva Lekha, particularly Ms Aviska Tharuni, Graphics Designer, who helped locate some of the lecture notes and to Mr. Hemantha Damendra, Head of Vishva Lekha, whose dedication and hard work helped print this Volume on time.

I am very grateful to Madam Neetha Ariyaratne, Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, and to all other family members for their encouragement and kindness. I truly appreciate the fact that all of them have embraced me as a part of their extended family.

I would like to thank members of my own loving family who have always encouraged and supported me and to everyone I met during my 33+ years at Sarvodaya for their love and friendship.

Last but not least, I am extremely grateful to friends of Sarvodaya, who prefer to remain anonymous, for offering to bear the entire cost of the publication of this Volume. On behalf of Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne and Sarvodaya, I extend my gratitude to them.

Yamuna Balasooriya

Personal Assistant

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

Justice of the Peace for the Whole Island

5th November, 2020

Introduction

The 10th Volume of the Collected writings of A.T. Ariyaratne is guaranteed in advance a place in history. Ari, as his close friends call him, or "Loku Sir," as he known at the Sarvodaya headquarters in Moratuwa, is a living legend. His childhood in a village in the south of Sri Lanka reads like it is directly out of a novel by Martin Wickramasinghe - readers of the first volume of his autobiography could be forgiven with confusing it with *Gampareliya* or *Apegama*. His adulthood, however, finds him sharing the world stage with a remarkable cast of contemporaries; from Che Gueavara to the Dalai Lama, from Vinoba Bhave to Jayaprakash Narayan, from Sai Baba to Krishnamurti to Walpola Rahula Thero. Yet he has never lost the village touch. His oratory and his prose deliver an unusually potent fusion of form and content; his use of language is always respectful, kind, modest, and even reverential - a model of *priyavachana* or "pleasant speech," - but make no mistake, on every subject matter, his vision is radical, controversial, and uncompromising. The book you hold in your hands, like the man who wrote it, is revolutionary.

This is not the place to tell the story of the Sarvodaya Movement which he started over 60 years ago; the story is told in detail in his lengthy autobiography, or summarized in *Revolution Under the Breadfruit Tree*, by Gunadasa Liyanage. Volume 10 of his Collected Writings collects Dr. Ariyaratne's speeches from 2013 to 2019, mostly in Sri Lanka but also in India and Vietnam. His audience is diverse - students, Sarvodaya employees, bankers, religious leaders of multiple faiths, NGO workers, development experts, and doctors. Hopefully, this collection will allow his words to reach a much wider audience, and also help us to meditate upon his vision as a whole, to the extent that these speeches review and reflect the culmination of his vision over the course of his life's work.

Each chapter delivers thunderbolts. The gentleness with which he always introduces himself and warms up to his subject are the gathering clouds which prepare for lightning to strike.

This collection includes a speech at the inauguration of the Sarvodaya Movement's new bank. Bertold Brecht once asked “what is the robbing of a bank compared to the founding of a bank?” Ariyaratne takes this contradiction head-on. “The present day economic systems,” he says, “make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Bribery, corruption deception, thievery, waste and environmental destruction have become the features of the modern economic system.” He entrusts the Sarvodaya Movement with the mission of a very different kind of bank, “based on the philosophy and principles contained in the teachings of the Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhave, Shri Jayapraprakash Narayan and other Indian and Sri Lankan leaders.” If it sounds like a long shot, Dr. Ariyaratne is not deterred; he insists on not just a new bank but a new economic system - “a harmonious system where both economic needs and spiritual values are combined” - and reminds his audience that the future is in their hands: “Dear friends, the success or failure of what we are going to start today mostly depends on you… It is expected of you to sacrifice your time and energies to build a new Sri Lankan economy.”

When speaking to micro-financiers, he questions whether micro-finance is at all useful when measured against macro-finance. While the Sarvodaya Movement has a long history of work in the field of micro-finance, and today even has a commercial bank he is uncompromising in his condemnation of modern banking. He takes a strong stand against economic growth and the whole concept of development as we know it, reminding everyone that the current economic system of profiteering and endless growth is a mortal threat to humanity and all life on earth.

When speaking to NGO workers in the field of human rights, he begins by distilling the essence of spirituality, and applies this into a systematic program for a non-violent revolutionary transformation of the individual, the family, the village, the nation and the world. Based on this, he submits based on his experience that the political concept of human rights may be insignificant compared to more fundamental issues such as the satisfaction of basic needs. He further challenges the whole basis of the

conception of non-governmental organisations; insisting that civil society and government must work together for there to be the transformation of society we need.

When speaking to his colleagues in the Sarvodaya Movement on the eve of an election, you get a taste of him rallying his troops. He counsels them to work selflessly to ensure a fair and peaceful election - you had to be in Sri Lanka at that time to understand the tension and the stakes. But in the next breath he denounces the whole electoral system as harmful, and insists that the only hopeful future resides in the system of dual power emerging around the island based on village self-governance.

This 10th volume is particularly significant in that it is the first to announce and articulate the next, emerging stage of the Sarvodaya Movement's vision - as it embarks from the awakening of the village (*gramodaya*) to the awakening of the nation (*deshodaya*). The Deshodaya philosophy and program is delivered in detail in his speech at the kick-off of this campaign, in which he instructs his audience "to organize Deshodaya groups in every locality and village and to prepare them for a total non-violent national revolution."

The course of true revolution never runs smooth. He admits that there will be many obstacles, and that this process will be opposed not only by government, the private sector, the media, and by organized religion, but also by many of the common people themselves: "They are under the false impression that democracy cannot function without parties; that there is no way to build self governance and just economy from below; that to build our country we need investors and experts and capital and science and technology from abroad. All these false ideas should be erased from the minds of people. Deshodaya Movement should liberate people from this slavish mentality."

The total revolution Dr. Ariyaratne outlines in this historic speech is both social and ecological. Not only the constitution of Sri Lanka but its very environment must be transformed from the bottom up. He sounds the call

“to cultivate every possible inch of land with vegetables, fruits, edible leaves and flowering plants without applying chemical fertilizers and pesticides.” He laments that “the natural environment is being irreversibly destroyed,” and warns that if the people do not unite in a national movement of awakening, “our country will inevitably become a polluted desert.”

When speaking to religious leaders at an interfaith peace summit, he reviews the history of the interfaith movement - from 1893 to the present, from Chicago to Japan to Tibet to Hawaii - and wonders candidly, after 60 years of his work in this field, if there will ever be peace. He suggests that peace will not come unless we overcome organized religions themselves, which have “become an integral part of an unjust political and economic system.” He concludes that there will never be peace on earth “unless we add a new revolutionary dimension to our traditional agenda.”

When speaking to physicians, he acknowledges and praises the accomplishments of the Sri Lankan medical profession, but laments some “hard facts” - that “insatiable greed... has infected almost every profession,” including medicine. He begs doctors to step outside their clinics and heal society. Referencing to the catastrophic health crisis of chronic kidney disease afflicting Sri Lanka, he calls upon doctors to lead the people in a movement to “remove the vicious multinational and local business gangsters' holds over their families.”

When speaking to development experts, he condemns all the “mega” thinking and the “mega” projects; again challenging the whole modern concept of development. “I have never seen such a degeneration of our moral values,” he laments. He asks, “is there something radically wrong in what we are doing?” The answer is crystal clear for him: “it is time after 68 years of freedom to come down to earth, to start from the tank, the paddy field, the village.” In an era when the fate of nations and the planet has been entrusted to jet-setting experts, he insists that “only the village people can counteract the global problems we are facing today.” This lecture on economics is not about supply and demand or imports and

exports, but is wide-ranging and free-wheeling; soaring from the mother's womb to the next world.

His lecture at a book launch about Buddhism in Sri Lanka reveals him as a serious scholar of philosophy and history. He retells the story of Sarvodaya at the height of danger, beginning with the pogroms of July 1983 and through the Civil War. Then he places this within the context of over two millennia of history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, which he reviews in considerable detail. He laments the phenomenon of power-seeking Bhikkhus, and while defending the Mahasangha, insists that Sri Lanka has yet to see real Buddhist governance.

When speaking at a conference on the "Fourth Industrial Revolution," he flourishes as a radical Buddhist in the 21st century; expressing sincere respect for the innovations of technology and the people who promote it, but with the next breath calling the whole course of modern history into question. "Who gained from the past three industrial revolutions?" he asks, and answers: "Certainly they were not the people in general or those who deserved it most." Instead it was the "ruling classes" and "imperial powers" who reaped the benefits of industrialization, electrification and digitalization, while the farmers and labourers have always suffered. This essay begins with a distilled summary of Buddhist philosophy in a couple pages (!) and then - to an audience gathered to hear about 3D printing and nanotechnology - he humbly admits: "I do not think that there is any scientific discovery or technological innovation done during the last 2,600 years comparable to the enunciation and exposition of the above teachings." Poised on the verge of yet another industrial revolution which most of the world applauds, he questions whether industrialized and technologically advanced societies are any happier, and concludes that they most definitely are not - instead "the human personality is lost in a barren desert of technological deserts." In a material and cultural world saturated with technology and blind faith in the Manifest Destiny of technological advancement, he champions the values of pre-industrial societies and laments their deterioration: "I wonder whether all these

advancements contribute to the degeneration of our historical, intellectual and cultural roots." He suggests that for any new technology to be beneficial to mankind it must be rooted in a philosophy of respect for all life.

When speaking to students, this old school teacher is perhaps at his finest. He lectures graduates of the management and commerce faculty about revolutionary Marxism and radical environmentalism. He praises their prestigious academic accomplishments, but explains how he has spent his life "trying to understand and learn from the poorest of the poor." Acknowledging without judgement that most of his audience sought higher education in order to get a job or a promotion, he says "I do not blame you for that kind of self-centred thinking," but invites them "to make a much higher resolution which will one day make you an extraordinary human being." With a masterful non-violent one-two punch, he advises them to be selfless rather than self-centred, and thereby to "not underestimate your potential to make a significant change for the better in the society you are living in." He concludes with a question absolutely foreign to most modern institutions of higher learning: "shouldn't the educated class... educate the masses and together launch a non-violent revolution?"

So how do we begin? This volume begins with a reprint of the "Sarvodaya Peace Meditation Program." This program distils the essence of the Sarvodaya movement's "Buddhism at work" (to borrow the title of an important study of the Sarvodaya movement by George Bond), and it can be adapted by any people of any spiritual tradition in any country. As humanity runs the gauntlet of the 21st century between world war and mass extinction, the urgency and relevance of this program grows with every passing minute.

While I am self-conscious as a *suddha* to be given the honour of introducing this 10th volume, in a way it is appropriate, as my experience and participation with the Sarvodaya movement corresponds almost exactly to the time period that these speeches were delivered. I first

visited the Sarvodaya movement in 2015, and wrote an article for *Telesur* based on visits to Moratuwa, Batticaloa and Kalutara. Sharing the dream of *vishvodaya* (world awakening) I worked to build bridges between Sarvodaya and parallel revolutionary movements in South America. In 2016 and 2017, I helped to facilitate the Sarvodaya movement's participation in the convocation and founding of the First Ecosocialist International, where Sarvodaya's method and message resonated with representatives of ecosocialist movements and organizations from five continents, who gathered in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to write a "500 year plan for the salvation of Mother Earth." The idea of the necessity of a 500 year perspective - which is referenced and this volume, and elaborated in detail by the "500 year Peace Plan" written by Vinya Ariyaratne - was directly inspired by the Sarvodaya movement. The "Combined Strategy and Plan of Action" of the Ecosocialist International states:

"We recognize the practices developed by the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement of Sri Lanka, and particularly their Peace Army (Shanti Sena), which intervenes in zones of war and conflict with direct actions of a non-violent character; including meditation as an instrument of struggle to demobilize and/or deactivate the hatred, xenophobia, confrontation and fear which seek to terrorize and intimidate our peoples. We commit ourselves on a quest to replicate these practices on the five continents, and to activate them in the face of any imminent risk of fascism or world war."

In short, I have seen first-hand how Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne's revolutionary vision resonates profoundly not only in Sri Lankan villages but around the world, in places that have never heard of him or the movement he founded. In 2019 I came to live in Sri Lanka, and have been accompanying the movement ever since, in particular working with the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning. I have blessed by the hospitality and generosity of this movement, and would like to conclude by thanking everyone who has welcomed me. Thanks first of all to Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne and to the members of his family who it has been my honor to meet, his

wife Neetha Ariyaratne and particularly his son Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne. Thanks to Yamuna Balasooriya for entrusting me with this task. Thanks to Sarvodaya Head Quarters staff and Samath Gammampila, Chamith Pubuditha, John P. Clark, and Alexander Schieffer. Lastly, thanks to my immediate Sri Lankan family for our ongoing *kutumbodaya;* Kanya, Peter, Maria, and Freya D'Almeida, Ashwini Aiyar, and Khalil James.

*by **Quincy Saul**, October 2020*

[1]"The Awakening of Economics," by Quincy Saul, Telesur, May 2015
[2]Available online at www.ecosocialisthorizons.com

03

Sarvodaya Peace Meditation Programme

Introduction and Guide to Participants

"I wish to be a participant in the process of spiritual awakening to bring about peace to our country and the world. I spare no pains to bring about unity amongst the entire citizenry, irrespective of caste, race, nationality, religion and politics. May this endeavor of mine contribute to end violence and war"

2nd October 1999

Organization and Implementation

The Sarovodaya Shanthisena Movement (Peace Brigade), with cooperation from other independent Units of Sarvodaya, is responsible for the organization and implementation of the Sarvodaya Peace Meditation Programe. Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement with its 41 year history is dedicated to the development and peace within Sri Lanka and the world, regardless of race, nationality, religion and politics.

Participation

All persons, groups and organizations accepting and respecting the principle of non-violence can participate in the Sarvodaya Peace Meditation Programme. They should have faith in spiritual energies within themselves.

Necessity

Today nobody's life is safe. Society has become so addicted to violence that the lives of infants up to the old people are threatened, to such an extent that nobody can predict what moment danger comes their way. Sri Lanka occupies a leading place in daily rate of global violence. Violence through personal animosity, greed, political and ethnic conflicts, is now quite common. The war situation in the North and East and the resultant acts of terrorism committed in other parts of the country do not seem to cease.

While it is the responsibility of the government to resort to a course of action through accepted national and international law to change this situation as citizens, it is our duty to find out the causes that led to such a dreadful situation, and make every effort to bring about remedial action. Sarvodaya decided to launch The People's Peace Initiative to fulfill this obligation.

People's Peace Initiative

Sarvodaya's effort counts over four decades of service. During this period, in 12,000 villages, based on the principles of truth, non-violence and self-denial, a peace and development programme encompassing spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political spheres have been conducted daily with community participation. In these villages, with people's participation, peace conferences, peace meditationa, programmes, refugee services, relief, rehabilitation and conflict resolution services are continuously carried out by Sarvodaya.

Sarvodaya took the first step and launched its national peace efforts on Sunday 29 August, 1999 at Vihara Maha Devi Park. About 200,000 participated, the greater number of whom was from Sarvodaya villages. These villagers sacrificed their time, recourses, and labour, and organized themselves for this gigantic national peace meditation programme. The second step will take on Saturday 16 October, 1999 in Anamaduwa in the Puttalam District, by conducting a Peace meditation walk and mass Peace Meditation Programme. In weeks to follow, similar programmes will be carried out in all other districts. Our endeavour is to train one million people in peace meditational action programmes in the coming months.

Why Peace Meditation?

When an individual lacks inner peace, domestic harmony is affected. When domestic harmony is lost, peace amongst neighbors too thins out. In this manner, when ithe nner peace of an individual is lost, the family, neighborhood, country and the world too start losing their peaceful

atmosphere. Persons and groups lacking peace of mind hang on to nationality, language, religion, politics, ethics groups, high status, low positions, etc, and engage themselves in anti-social acts of crime, terrorism and war.

We believe the only way to achieve peace is to cultivate individual and collective inner peace. It is not possible to achieve peace by speeches laden with sentiments, slogan shouting rallies, using weapons, blaming one another and arousing mob feelings. Neither minds tarnished with anger and ill will, nor loading people with political compromises, will bring in peace. Hatred cannot be overcome with hatred. War is not a path to peace. “The armed get destroyed by arms.” There is a wonderful potential and strength in our minds - thoughts in the proper direction help achieve self-composure.

A well-developed mind - not subservient to five sense activity, not missing proper direction, not falling prey to undesirable influence, thereby being successful in personal life and promoting peace among people - is achieved through meditation. Persons who have developed their minds through meditation are constantly in a proper state of mind, and the spiritual aura emanating from pure thoughts influences others also.

We have to set apart some time daily for meditation in order to lead successful lives individually, as families, and as members of a community. Life devoid of meditation is limited to five sense activity and lacks essence. It is a life which brings no good to oneself or to the society. It only brings sorrow. When a very large number of persons congregate with composure of mind and body, and engage in meditation walks and mass peace meditations, the power of the spiritual energy generated makes our minds peaceful and calm. This helps us to set aside the thoughts of greed, to cultivate thoughts of selfless service, to stop being hateful, and to extend loving kindness towards all; to destroy narrow, selfish unwholesome thoughts and thereby to make the mind recipient of wisdom unmatched.

Our cultural values, sharing or giving (*dana*) moral behavior (*sila*) concentration and purification of mind (s*amadhi*) are factors to which we attach great importance. Today these are shattered. Due to this situation people have become wicked and even the words they utter carry venom in them. To save humanity, a suitable physical, mental and societal atmosphere should be built so that everybody together can make an effort to live harmoniously. The People's Peace Initiative is such an effort; the strategy adopted is mediation.

We do not retaliate against the cruel and violent activities of others by being inhumanely cruel to them. Instead we release powerful compassionate thought waves. Mahatma Gandhi said “If you adopt the policy of revenge, eye for an eye, then the entire humanity will go blind.” Through forgiveness and repentance for mistakes made, one can dispel inhuman behavior and get back to a human level of behavior. Through mass meditation programmes we can be a contributory factor. We fulfill a community need and not the need of the government or any particular political party. These two should not be mixed up. Ours is a spiritual endeavor based on religious belief .

We treat with equanimity persons who have got themselves engaged in a mix-up and who blame us. In due course they too will join our peace effort. Hatred is not overcome by hatred. Only through loving kindness hatred is overcome.

Peace meditation walks and mass peace meditations are conducted in absolute silence. No banners displaying demands are carried. There is no room for lectures and speeches. People are allowed to carry the name boards of their organizations only.

Preliminary arrangements for meditation

Persons who have made it a habit to meditate daily need no advice. The moment you decide to participate in a meditation walk or a mass peace meditation programme, contemplate on the depth of your decision. Prepare your mind, speech and body for this important task.

Think on these lines:

I shall not kill. I shall not harbor the thought to kill. I extend loving kindness to all beings. I shall not steal. I shall refrain from mis conduct. I shall speak truth only. I shall refrain from taking intoxicants, drugs and smoking. I shall refrain from indulging in useless talk, carrying tales, using words expressing hate, and blaming people who do not cooperate with us. I shall take in sufficient food to sustain myself and not to satisfy greed. During this period I shall only take vegetarian diet. I shall not come for the meditation programme decked in gold and silver. I shall wear white, an appropriate dress when I engage myself in religious activity and participate in the mass meditation.

If person desires to be benefitted by the mass meditation it is essential that such persons should prepare their mind, body and speech in this manner. Then even after the meditation their lives will be directed on the right path. They will receive divine blessings which they have hitherto not experienced. Persons who come to associate with them will also be led on the right path. The more spiritual energy that is released, the more the society is fortified with peace and development.

Invocation

I am a participant in the mass meditation effort to bring about spiritual awakening within the country and across the entire planet. I make my contribution to unite people of all races, nationalities, religions, political views, without any difference whatsoever. Through this endeavor, may violence and war cease to exist. Release this pure thought to space, to the psychosphere.

Time

From the time you leave home, guard all your thoughts, words and action and be mindful. The meditation peace walk and mass peace meditation will be for three hours. This three hour period is the culminating point of

our spiritual exercise. In all four of our sense related bodily positions be mindful.

Peace Meditation Walk

Line up in three columns. Leave sufficient space in front, behind and the two sides for easy walking. Do not wear headgear or find shelter under umbrellas. Focusing the eye at the tip of your nose, lifting one foot, putting it down, without looking elsewhere, mindfully disciplining yourself on the meditation walk, proceed onwards. Paying no attention to any sound or incident but your breath in and breath out, walk forward. Enter the mass peace meditation premises, extending loving kindness to all beings, humans, animals and plants. On reaching the premises without disturbing others sit in a comfortable posture.

Religions Observance

Prepare your minds for meditation by observing your religious practices.

Meditation

From now onwards for a period of nearly one hour as instructed by the meditation teacher, engage in *Anapana*, breath by breath meditation, meditation on loving kindness, *vipassana* meditation, and direct your mind towards the common mediation towards spiritual upliftment without religious differences.

Aspiration

Direct the last five minutes of your meditation to spread in all directions the spiritual energy amassed by all of us, wishing for peace for all.

Blessings

Ten minutes is set apart for blessings from various religious dignitaries.

Invocation Song

May there be timely rain

May the harvests be bountiful

May the minds of people be compassionate

May the rulers be righteous

04

Spiritual Economic Approach to National Awakening

Inauguration of the
Deshodaya Development and Finance Company,
Bandaranaike International Memorial Hall

I am sure you will agree with me that today 28th January 2013 is a very important day for members of the Sarvodaya Movement. Today we are taking another step to realize the dream of a Sarvodaya Society for which we have struggled for over five decades. Therefore, I believe on a historic occasion like this we should briefly remind ourselves about the long and arduous journey we made so far.

The Sarvodaya Movement had its beginning in an economically depressed, socially ostracized community in 1958 when a group of students and teachers volunteered to encamp in that village for a couple of weeks. During this period they worked hand in hand with the village community to satisfy the need for an access road to their village, to construct some wells to provide clean drinking water, to build some toilets for their sanitary purposes, to start a primary school for their children, and to fulfill several other basic needs. This entire exercise was based on voluntary labour which everybody could contribute and successfully cater to some basic welfare and development needs of the people. Shramadana became known nationally and internationally. Our intention was to give a helping hand to communities that were poor and powerless, to awaken and lift themselves by using labour, land, social capital, traditional technology, science and wisdom which were at their disposal and for which they did not have to depend on outsiders. This methodology gave an opportunity for depressed village communities to develop self-reliance and community participation. With self respect they could design their own development programmes and implement them.

Ten years later, i.e. in 1967, the Sarvodaya Movement started a 100 villages integrated development programme to celebrate the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhhi. On that occasion we had the Honorable Prime Minister, President of the Senate, leaders of all parties including the left leaders. The Indian High commissioner in Sri Lanka H.E. Mr. Gandevia was a special guest and he made a speech. After a period of 46 years, when we ceremoniously inaugurate the Deshodaya Development Finance Company as a new economic venture of the movement, we are delighted

to have amidst us the present Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, H.E. Mr. Ashok K. Kantha.

This financial organization will carry out programmes based on the philosophy and principles contained in the teachings of the Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, Acharya Vinoba Bhava, Shri Jayapraprakash Narayan and other Indian and Sri Lankan leaders. We in Sri Lanka and India should accept the challenge of presenting to the world community a new economic system. The present day economic systems make the rich richer and the poor poorer. Bribery, corruption deception, thievery, waste and environmental destruction have become the features of the modern economic system. What the world need today is a harmonious system where both economic needs and spiritual values are combined. It is what we call the Artha Dhamma System.

During the last 55 years Sarrvodaya Movement had struggled very hard to serve people in six sectors. Those tens of thousands of beneficiaries will give testimony to the contribution we made in the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political sectors. Our objective was to lift up the most downtrodden communities to an acceptably decent level in which they can live with self respect. We designed programmes starting for children in the mothers' womb, and stretching up to the old people; so that individuals, families, rural and urban communities, the nation and the international community are benefitted by our contribution towards the well being of all. All these programmes we successfully implemented could be seen functioning at different degrees in about 15,000 villages in Sri Lanka. The economic aspect is only one sector in our development effort.

Therefore, I should mention here that the Deshodaya Development Finance Company we are launching today has several special features different from other similar financial institutions. Sarvodaya Economic Enterprises Development Services (Gte) Limited for 15 years tried out savings and micro finance entrepreneurship and other programmes. For another 15 years prior to this Sarvodaya experimented with several

economic ventures. Only after all this experience did we get permission from the Central Bank to operate a finance company. It took a long time to obtain the license because our objectives, composition, principles and operational systems were quite different from the others engaged in the business of finance. Ours is not a profit making business nor are we going to run it at a loss.

There are two new creations of Sarvodaya during the last three years. First was the formation of divisional, district and national level Deshodaya Councils where, with a target of 100,000 volunteers we are attempting to change the consciousness of the people - the economically exploited styles of livelihood and the power relationships to which they are subjected. These members of the Deshodaya Councils have to bring about unity among the people, revive their ancient value systems and contribute to building peace in the country. The second creation was the Deshodaya Development Finance Company. Its goal in the decades to come is to build up a just, fair and non-violent economy, without harming the spiritual, moral and cultural values of our country; to bring together the government and the private sector with economic ventures based on moral principles; to work towards the peace and prosperity of Sri Lanka.

The main purpose of the Deshodaya Development Finance Company is not to maximize profit. Neither myself nor any other leader of Sarvodaya own shares in this company. There are 1,500 village level societies represented at this gathering, there are others who have not come to this gathering, and there are others who have not come to this inauguration. So, it may be that nearly a million people are stakeholders of this company. We believe that while we generate just and fair income we can help rural communities with their much needed capital for their production and consumption needs. It is our intention to generate within communities with whom we work a lifestyle not based on satisfying greed but satisfying need. We will not support any economic venture that is harmful to the environment or violate social norms.

As the chairman of the company and other Directors of the Company will be speaking I am not going to give more details. But I would like to say a few words to the members of our societies who are assembled here.

Dear friends, the success or failure of what we are going to start today mostly depends on you. At this first stage only 1,500 of our societies have been invited to send representatives. Other societies with the help of SEEDS (Gte) limited will progressively obtain membership. Similarly, those Sarvodaya Societies that have not yet started economic activities may join this company in the future.

From today, even those outside our movement will have the opportunity to participate in financial activities, including placing deposits with and obtaining loans from this company. Those wealthy people whose needs are well satisfied and who have earned their wealth in a righteous way can contribute to this company without expecting very high interest, but with the desire to contribute a part of their wealth towards the effort of alleviating poverty in this country.

Honesty, self-sacrifice, and efficiency on your part are most important for the success of this progressive venture. Most of our societies in the past became weak because of the moral lapses on the part of the elected leaders. Please do not allow this to happen. Against those who are dishonest and corrupt there is always the opportunity of talking legal action, and of learning from the past mistakes. It is expected of you to sacrifice your time and energies to build a new Sri Lankan economy.

We dream of a world which is a commonwealth of self-governing communities. We dream of people enjoying participatory democracy; where all human rights are respected, where spiritual and moral values are strong, where people respect nature, and finally where communication technologies are highly developed so that each community can be in close touch with its own nation and the world. Only then can the world's resources and the advancement in science and technology contribute to a world free of violence as well as poverty.

Before concluding I would like to thank our Chief Guest, His Excellency Mr. Ashok K. Kantha, the High Commissioner for India in Sri Lanka and other distinguished guests. Also I would like to thank all representatives from far off villages who have come here for this auspicious occasion. Last but not the least. I highly appreciate, admire and thank Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, chairman of the Deshodaya Development Finance Company, Mr. Daya Muthukumarana the advisor, Mr. Shakila Wijewardane, Managiing Director and all the other officials who worked day and night for several months to make this event a success. I wish all of you a very happy and peaceful New year 2013.

05

The Role of Religion in Reconciliation

Keynote Address Delivered at the National Conference on Religion and Reconciliation held at Laksman Kadirgamer Institute for International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKIIRES) Colombo

At the outset I wish to thank Mr. Asanga Abeygoonesekera, Executive Director of Lakshman Kadirgamer Institute for International relations and Strategic Studies, for inviting me to deliver the Keynote address at this National Conference on " The Role of Religion Reconciliation."

I understand that this conference is the eighth in a series organized by the Institute where the subject of Reconciliation is being studied and discussed from a number of perspectives. For my part I do not claim to be a scholar or a national leader who can influence the intellectuals and the decision makers in our society. From my student days up to today for nearly sixty-six years, I have been engaged in working at the grassroots level to empower those who are the poorest and the most powerless in our society. Out of this period over fifty five years were spent with the **Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement**. So my remarks on the subject assigned to me, namely. **The role of religious in reconciliation** will be conditioned by the experiences I had both in our country and abroad in carrying out Sarvodaya activities.

This is a very timely conference, especially as it is being held at a time of great national debate on the system of devolved government and the role of the International community. The delay in achieving reconciliation after the end of the war gives the discussion to day special relevance. There is polarization within the country that is manifested in election results that reflect an ethnic divide. Internationally, there is the accusation of serious human rights violations that is not going away due to inability to make a satisfactory response. There is no agreement between Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims on key political issues or between Government and Opposition on addressing the burning issues.

Providing a leadership that heals the wounds of war and transforms the structures of governance into ones that meet the aspirations of both the ethnic majority and minorities is the continuing challenge for our beloved country. It is m y conviction that the vision and work of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement can contribute in some measure to reconciling the people of our country consisting of all communities and

living in different regions. Sarvodaya a word coined by Mahatma Gandhi to mean working for the **"Welfare of All**" We in Sri Lanka adopted this word giving it a broader meaning which is consonant with the Buddhist cultural background. Sarvodaya we defined as "Awakening of All" The meaning of the word "Buddha" is the Awakened One'" The Sarvodaya concept of the Awakening of All goes beyond human beings. It includes:

"Whatsoever living beings there are, weak or strong, without exception, long or short, large, medium or small, subtle or gross, those seen or unseen, those dwelling near or far, and those born or yet to be born. May all beings without exception be happy."(the Buddha- Karaniya Metta Sutta)

"let one's thoughts of boundless loving kindness pervade the whole world, above, below, across, without obscuration, without hatred, without enmity ("The Buddha-Samyutta Nikaya)

"Loving-kindness or compassionate love purifies the mind and the mind becomes a very energetic force to radiate for the well-being of others" (Ven Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda)

"When practiced together with wisdom and insight Metta will indeed become a powerful healing force which will transform us into a more compassionate and carrying community, as well as transmuting all negative energies and entitles into light, love and harmony." (Ven. Bhante Mahinda of Australia, the Founder of Aloka Foundation and the Metta Round the world Movement.)

If at all we in Sarvodaya had nay theoretical foundation which inspired us, the teachers and students of Nalanda Collage Colombo, and later hundreds of other individuals and educational institutions, it was the above thought of Metta or loving - kindness to All. Certainly this thought was from the teachings of the Buddha. But it had the capacity to go beyond the boundaries of a religion and become a spiritual force to transform people's consciousness, their social, economic and political beliefs and behavior. Our principle objective was, first, our own . total

Personality Awakening (Purna Paurushodaya) by practicing Metta (Loving Kindness). Karuna (compassionate Actions), Muditha (Acquiring Altruistic Joy) and Upekkha (Living with Equanimity). The Buddha named these four qualities as Brashma Viharas (Four Sublime Abodes).

Metta is an easily acquirable spiritual practice through regular meditation. However one has to take another step to translate Metta into Karuna or Compassionate Action. For this exercise we selected the economically poorest, socially most depressed, politically most powerless, rural communities in our country. In small groups such as 50 volunteers or in big groups such as several hundred we encamped in these villages, sometimes going several miles on foot, we reached these villages, encamped among the people, organized the community and worked with them physically building access roads, village tanks, irrigation canals, wells, school buildings community centers, land reclamations and tree planting campaigns and so on, all connected to Basic Human Needs satisfaction of communities as identified by them.

Within nearly three decades we covered the whole country not leaving out any community including the plantations communities. In village communities, we hardly faced any opposition to this program from the common people except for a few people whose social status got threatened when caste, class, racial, party political, religious and other barriers that divided people were breaking down. Sarvodaya never aimed to build an affluent society out of these poor and powerless communities. Sarvoday's objective was a No-Poverty, No-Affuluence society beginning from the village communities and progressively going upwards to influence the whole nation and decision makers.

This was no easy task as Sarvodaya believed in three salient principles of Truth, Non-violence and Self-denial. This also implies that we totally reject social, economic and political organizations that promoted Greed, Aversions and Ignorance. Some of these organizations unfortunately are founded on organized Greed and Violence. By controlling the media in various devious ways they keep the people in a Bliss of Ignorance of

Reality. It is sad that the same cancerous greed for wealth and power using organized terror and violence that promoted imperialist interests using Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam for over 2000 years have reached our shores in recent decades.

Ian Fry, an Australian scholar, researcher and writer with whom I made acquaintance in the meetings of world Conference on Religion and Peace, has written a book titled "TROUBLE IN THE TRAINGEL" This book is in five parts and over 2100 pages where the history of three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and their involvement in all the wars and blood shed that occurred not only in Europe and the Middle East but all over the world are vividly described. Sarvodaya struggled for over 55 years to counter this disastrous trend coming to Sri Lanka by high lighting the Spiritual Awakening aspect of religions without being partial to or confronting ant religious dogma, rituals or practices.

At this point I wish to quote our most beloved Laksman Kadirgamer who said "the battle for peace" (has to be) fought in the hearts and minds of people. It is won or lost there. One can win wars but lose peace"

It is widely believed that the people are politically apathetic and are too afraid of retribution to be involved in political affairs. This is a justifiable concern; however, it must also be remembered that much of the population remains in a state of poverty and does not have the opportunity to think about ideological issues when their very survival is so difficult to pursuer. Furthermore, they have become subject to the propaganda regularly circulated by the media. Seminars, pamphlets and other educational materials, though they be useful, will thus have limited impact at the grassroots level. **We have to aim at a critical mass of spiritual consciousness pervading the whole nation**.

I would submit that Sarvodaya's work highlights the positive effects of a grassroots movement for peace. Working in more than 15,000 villages all across the country Sarvodaya has been able to persuade both the people and their immediate leaders to support and maintain an active

peace. Since it recognizes that a holistic effort is needed for full peace to occur, Sarvodaya also works at the district, divisional and national levels. However, it is most recognized for its advances at the grassroots. **What is evident from the work is the reservoir of untapped goodwill that exists between the religious communities at the grassroots level**. When religious leaders are brought together in structured initiatives they begin to better understand each other and to work together.

A research paper written on Faith - based Peace Building Efforts in Sri Lanka has made the following observation on Sarvodaya's efforts.

“Peace work at the grassroots level must, therefore, include a means of empowering the people and improving their lives. While the institutional peace organizations recognize in their lives. While the institutional peace organizations recognize in their efforts to address specific needs of the people, an organization that has taken this precept further is The Sarvodaya Movement. Working intensively at the grassroots level, Sarvodaya believes in “Peace through development” and uses the concept of a common human spirituality to heal hostile relations and create a community-based solidarity.

Although infused with Buddhist values, Sarvodaya works through a cross-cultural, inter-religious attempt to bottom-up peace building. Since it views peace as one of many human needs, it organizes programs in which peace and village-level developments go hand. During these programs, people from many religious and ethnic backgrounds convene to work on a common project that both enhances their community, and build strong human ties. Since people overlook barriers such as race, religion, or political affiliation to solve a mutual problem, it establishes a sense of a common humanity and allows for an empathetic understanding of the other to take place.

“Sarvodaya work highlights the positive efforts of a grassroots movement for peace. Working in more than 15,000 villages all across the country (including the war-stricken North and East) Sarvodaya has been able to

persuade both the people and their immediate leaders to support and maintain an active peace. Since, it recognizes that a holistic effort is needed for full peace to occur, Sarvodaya also works at the pradeshiya sabha (divisional council), district, zonal and national levels. However it is most recognized for its advances at the grassroots."

If I may very briefly mention, from the Sarvodaya experience spanning over half a century a theatrical framework with practical programs which can be implemented at Individual, Family, Urban and Rural Community. National and World levels have been formulated and leaders at different levels are trained at the Sarvodaya Institute of Higher Learning at Bandaragama. These programs are targeted at total Personality awakening (Purna Paurushodaya), Family awakening (Kumbodaya, Urban and Village awakening (Nagarodaya and Gramodaya), National Awakening Deshodaya) and World Awakening (Vishvidaya). The Sarvodaya Movement is already working from village level to world level with the vision, mission, principles, programs and structures which are all being tried out for a non-violent transformation of our human society. We do not want to pollute these spiritual goals with the craze for power, wealth and popularity.

Out of numerous national level programs we have implemented mobilizing people in the 15000 village communities we are working with, for national peace and reconciliation; I will mention only four in this presentation:

ONE; When in 1983 July the worst ever racial violence took place our Sarvodaya Shanthi Sena (Peace Brigade) members fearlessly took to the streets to mitigate violent actions against the helpless victims by organizing refugee camps in co-operation with the government in all parts of the country. Sarvodaya started what came to be known as the 5R program namely, Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Reawakening programs. From 1983 up to 2009 we implemented the 5R program which benefitted several thousands of affected Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim people right through distributed and war times. During the

Tsunami we extended this 5R program to North and East also including Mulative, killinochchi and Jaffna districts.

TWO; In 1983 August we organized the firat ever National Peace and Reconciliation Conference which lasted for two days at the BMICH with the participation of the Mahanayake Theros of all four Buddhist Nikayas, Hindu Swamys, Christian Church leaders, Islamic religious dignitaries and over one thousand two hundred other participants. A peace plan was formulated and signed, and was handed over to the Head of State. H.E. President J.R. Jayawardene, similar interfaith conferences were held right through the war period and even after the war ended the last being about three months ago again held at BMICH.

THREE; In December 1983 for the first time in Sri Lanka Sarvodaya organized a Mass Interfaith Meditation program in the sacred city of Kataragama where thousands of clergy and laymen belonging to different faiths participated including Prime Minister Hon. R. Premadasa. After the mass meditation program nearly 30,000 joined the Peace Walk (Sama Pada Yaatra) we started from Kataragama, Kirivehera to Nagadipa in Jaffna. After we marched in silent mediation a distance of 13 miles H.E. President J.R. Jayawardene came to Tissamaharama and made a request to us to postpone the Peace mediation March as he was informed by his intelligence services that we would be attached on the way which may lead to a another round of communal violence. With great reluctance we postponed it but after two days we travelled in small groups across villages and concluded it at Nagadipa walking through Jaffna under very tense circumstances but without any incident. But the youg Japanese monk who stayed back in Jaffna against our advice and continued walking beating his Peace Drum was brutally shot down from behind by the terrorists and was killed.

FOUR; Sarvodaya continued its mass interfaith meditation sessions and peace meditational walks in all major districts, in all cities including Colombo, Kandy, Matara, Jaffna,Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Ampara and in all major places of religious worship from 1983 to 2013 without an

interruption. Over 100,000 participated in each of the interfaith mass meditation programs held in BMICH grounds and Vihara Maha Devi park in Colombo. The highest number nearly 900,000 participated in the meditation held at the sacred city of Anuradhapura and this program became the first such spiritual endeavour for peace where m any nations joined the program in their own country locations through the internet for peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka.

In peace and reconciliatory work there should be commitment and continuity. There should not be any compromise with Truth and Non-Violence. Power political and sectarian agendas of religions and races should give in to the supreme goal of awakening of all through Metta-Boundaries loving Kindness.

The experience in both Sri Lanka and elsewhere in the world of political struggle makes it evident that when the path of conflict is taken there is no natural end, only constant escalation. Stopping the spiral of conflict requires a conscious act of will and a strategy for de-escalation. It requires a vision of a transformative process, which will lead to the good of everyone, and it calls for faith that people and institutions will in fact change. **One of the greatest challenges in peacemaking is to see the opponent in a new light, as having part of the truth, whether terrorist or government, which is necessary to bring wholeness and peace.** There can be no positive transformation without engaging with the opponent and making them a part of the solution. This is where the Sarvodaya philosophy, which lays emphasis on the Awakening of All, has special relevance.

Religious leaders operate with district advantages when it comes to conflict resolution and peace- building to the degree that they espouse universal values that stress the well-being of all. Indeed, Sri Lanka's religious leadership has access to several critical resources that could assist peace building initiative in Sri Lanka, not least religious doctrines that teach universality and the wisdom that the “the world is one family to the wise” The extensive, well established religious networks and

institutions in Sri Lanka are valuable channels of communication and action. In fact, religious leaders generally have extensive reach and influence in Sri Lankan society, as the majority of the population belongs to a religious community, and are thus accessible through religious infrastructure.

Religion-based efforts hold immense potential to create peace in Sri Lanka. With the moral authority to decry conflict, and the social networks to mobilize support and public action, religious groups could spread the message of peace in effective and sustainable ways. In particular, inter-religious initiatives which aim to bridge ethno-religious divides and establish a discourse of understanding (even in the face of serve opposition), provide hope that a desire for reconciliation is strong and ever growing.

It is also important to note that the leadership of religiously involved personalities is constant and durable, especially when contrasted with the country's political leaders who are vulnerable to the pressures of a democratic electorate, and thus change more frequently. National religious leaders are long-term contributors to the people's awakening and upliftment, who have been present throughout the lengthy lifecycle of Sri Lanka's conflict. As a result, they are well poised to provide much needed continuity in approaches and commitment to peace building initiatives and advocacy in Sri Lanka. The religious clergy maintains a vey close relationship with the people of the country. Thus, they are well situated to undertake observatory and educational roles to discourage violence, corruption, human rights violations or other behavior which impedes viable and sustainable peace-building initiatives.

I believe that in many ways, such work may be more effective in changing attitudes and at promoting peace than similar work among those at the political level. The general population, by and large, have no concrete roles or agendas that prevent them from committing to a whole-hearted stand for peace. Peace through the grassroots is also comparatively more stable, since it builds up a movement rather than trying to persuade

multiple levels of the political, social, and religious hierarchies from the leadership and down. Most importantly, working at the grassroots by passes the need to work through those political structures that foster divisiveness; at the same time, it promotes a change in the hearts of the people, who together have the power to elect the political leaders and change the state of the nation.

Aniccha (Impermanence), Dukkha (Suffering) and Anatta (Non-self) were the spiritual guidelines our leaders have followed through centuries. These are common to all religious teachings. However, unfortunately, most of our present day leaders including the religious leaders appear to be following the opposite path namely, upholding the Nicca (permanence), Sukka (Affluence), and Atta (Egoism) as their guiding philosophy. Ordinary people blindly follow them. What a tragedy for this Dhammadipa ? Can we reverse this trend in the name of Peace and Reconciliation ?

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne

President - Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement
98, Damsak Mandira, Moratuwa, Sri Lanka
Web:www.sarvodaya.org
E-mail :atariyaratne@gmail.com

06

Religiosity, Spirituality and Different Themes that are decisive in the Present Context

A Special Lecture for the Staff of Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka,

I wish you a very happy and constructive New Year in the service of humanity and the entire living world. At the same time I wish to thank the Hon. Chairman, members of the Commission and the staff for the courtesy of inviting me to deliver the first special lecture of the year. I mostly spend my time these days in solitude; meditating, reading and writing and avoiding public speaking as much as possible. However, Ms Shirani Rajapaksa's persuasive telephone call has brought me here. Thank you Shirani.

I have been invited to speak on the subject of 'Religiosity, Spirituality and Different Themes that are Decisive in the Present Context.'

I must confess that I spent most of my life among the common people of my country. Very rarely I attend or speak at academic or scholarly gatherings. So I ask your forgiveness for the non-scholarly language I use to share my thoughts with you on the given subject. Also I am conscious of the fact that you are serving the Human Rights Commission of Sri Lanka and therefore whatever I say have to be some use to you in the performance of your duties.

Religiosity is an expression or a word I could never comprehend clearly. One can go to the root from which a word is coined, or look at practitioners of that particular quality the word is associated with, to understand its practical application or functional role. Religiosity is certainly linked with religion; a belief in a god or gods, which in itself is not harmful to anybody. However, if a person or a group of believers through their intense religiosity act in a competitive or harmful way to others who belong to other faiths then such extremist religiosity goes against all civilised forms of human conduct. This even causes endless bloodshed and conflicts.

In his speech delivered last week at a Salt March commemoration meeting in Bombay, the Venerable Prof. Sandhong Rinpoche, former Prime Minster of the Tibetan Government in Exile, had to say the following: Religiousness refers to the spiritual content of religion, Religiosity hints at the ritual aspect, and Religionism is only a matter of identity and has nothing to do with religion.

For me Spirituality is an expression which is easily understandable or comprehensible. The practice of true religion invariably results in the reduction of greed, craving, jealousies, aversions, enmities, hatred and illusions - simultaneously your loving kindness towards others, your compassion, beneficence, and wisdom develop. Spirituality is the cleansing of the mind from all defilements and leads to accumulation of virtues. Spirituality is a condition of the mind that transcends all religious divisions. If there is a critical mass of spiritual consciousness in the world, then all kinds of suffering that humanity as well as other forms of living beings go through, will be reduced considerably. Unfortunately we have not yet arrived at that peaceful and happy state of collective consciousness.

A couple of months ago I had the good fortune of spending two weeks in a forest meditation centre close to Sydney in Australia. Away from home, detached from all household or social responsibilities, from any form of communication with the outside world, I had the benefit of looking into my own inner self. There I experienced real spiritual joy. So the spirituality I advocate is an experience that you should not fail to enjoy. It is the real joy of human existence. Every year find at least a week, go into a spiritual retreat. But don't stop with that. Learn to integrate it into every moment of your life. Now let me go into the other themes that are decisive in the modern context.

If I may be permitted to reformulate the different factors that contribute constructively or destructively to the wellbeing or downfall of the world I would divide them into six categories. These are Spiritual, Moral, Cultural, Social, Political and Economic factors. These factors together affect the conditions prevailing in our societies. Depending on what factors influence us most at a particular time, the happiness, contentment and harmony in our society - or their opposites like suffering, discontentment and conflicts - will prevail.

In the work I was involved in during the past five years which is popularly known the world over as the Sarvodaya Movement, we divided these six

factors into two groups to realise two broad aims in our society, following our centuries old traditions, namely, the Dharmadweepa (Island of Righteousness) and Dhanyagara (Land of Economic Prosperity). Priority was given in our traditional society to values that promoted righteousness. Therefore, the spiritual, moral and cultural foundations were the three strong pillars on which the entire social, political and economic structures or systems were built - and not vice versa as it is happening today.

When the Sarvodaya Movement was initiated in the late 1950s, I wrote down ten negative characteristics I observed in the prevailing society at that time, and ten positive characteristics we should strive to generate to build a new social order. I believe that after this fifty year period the negative factors have become more damaging not only to the society as a whole but also to a lot of us as individuals and families, with the exception of a fortunate few who enjoy the lion's share of power and wealth in society. Even these fortunate few will become victims very soon unless these trends are reversed. It is still worse when one starts thinking of the destruction and pollution that are brought about of our life support systems as a whole, such as air, water, earth, climate and other ecological systems.

TABLE 1: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT ORDER IN RELATION TO THE DESIRED SARVODAYA SOCIAL ORDER

AN ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT SOCIAL ORDER IN RELATION TO THE DESIRED SARVODAYA SOCIAL ORDER

Present Order	Desired Order
1. LACKS SELF KNOWLEDGE AND SELF RELIANCE	1. STRIVES FOR SELF - REALISATION AND SELF RELIANCE.
2. BLINDLY FOLLOWS MATERIALISTIC VALUES	2. MOTIVATED BY INDIGENOUS CULTURAL AND VALUES.
3. WORSHIP WEALTH, POWER AND POSITION AND USES UNTRUTH, VIOLENCE AND SELFISHNESS.	3. RESPECTS VIRTUE, WESDOM AND SXILLIS AND USES TRUTH, NON-VIOLRNCE AND SELF DENIAL.

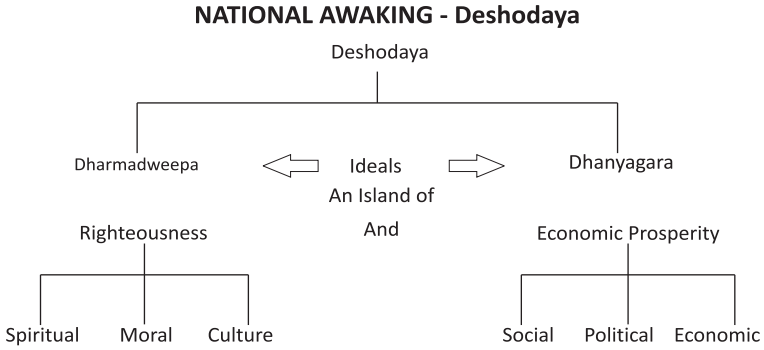
4. ORGANISATIONS BASED ON POSSESSION AND VICIOUS COMPETITION BECOME STRONG, CAPITALISTIC ECONOMY, BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL, POWER AND PARTY POLITICS BECOME MAJOR SOCIAL FORCES.	4. ORGANISATIONS BASED ON SHARING AND CO-OPERATION BECOME POWERFUL PEOPLE'S POLITICS BASED ON ECONOMIC TRUSTEESHIP PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND PARTY, LESS AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY BECOME MAJOR SOCIAL FORCES.
5. EVIL IN MAN IS HARNESSED. SOCIETY GETS FRAGMENTED INTO CASTE, RACIAL, RELIGIOUS AND PARTY - POLITICAL DIFERENSES.	5. GOOD IN MAN IS HARNESSED. SOCIETY TENDS TO GET INTEGRATED AS ONE HUMAN FAMILY ALL FORCES THAT DIVIDE PEOPLE GIVE WAY TO FORCES THAT UNITE.
6. ECONOMIC RESOURCES ARE IMPROPERLY UTILISED ECONOMY BECOMES WEAK, UNEMPLOYMENT DIFERENCES.	6. ECONOMIC RESOURCES ARE PROPERLY COMBINED. PRODUCTION INCREASES. EMPLOYMENT INCREASES. FULL-ENGADGEMENT SOCIETIES COME INTO BEIGN
7. DEPENDENCE ON AN IMPORT - EXPORT ECONOMY BASED ON COLONIALLY INHERITED PATTERNS OF PRODUCTION OF CASH CROPS. FOREIGN DEBTS INCREASE.	7. A SELF SUFFIENT ECONOMY BASED ON PEOPLE'S BASIC NEEDS. AN ECONOMY FREE FROM FOREIGN DEBTS. NATIONAL SELF RESPECT AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM.
8. SUBJUGATED TO LARGE SCALE ORGANISATIONS, HUMAN LABOUR WASTED. CORRUPTION INCREASES. ENVIRONMENT IS POLLUTED.	8. SMALL SCALE ORGANISATIONS LABOUR INTENSEVELY USED. LESS CORRUPTION REDUCTION OF PSYCHOLOGYCAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION.
9. VILLAGES ARE SUBSERVIENT TO THE CITIES. RURAL EXODUS, MORAL DEGENERATION, SOCIAL UNREST.	9. BALANCED VILLAGE AND URBAN AWAKENING. MORAL RECONSTRUCTION.
10.POWER OF THE STATE AND OF THE LAWS OF PUNISHMENT INCREASE. LAWS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEOPLE'S POWER WEAKENS.	10.LAWS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE POWER OF THE PEOPLE BECOME STRONG. NO RULING CLASS. PEOPLE'S POWER BECOME SUPREME. SRAVODAYA IS REALISED.

It is easy to be an armchair critic of what others do, or of what is going wrong in society. We can easily blame the ruling class, the political parties that govern us, the bureaucracy and so on, and yet do nothing constructive to change the prevailing situation. I do not agree with those who take to violent means to bring about change in society. Certainly the rulers get influenced by them and bring about very temporary palliatives. But after some time they sharpen the coercive instruments that a state always possesses, and oppression becomes worse than ever before. Without resorting to any form of violent or subversive actions, the organisation I work for is continuing its efforts within the prevailing laws of

the country (however suppressive these are) to bring about a non-violent transformation.

Sarvodaya is not discouraged. It is continuing with its efforts at effecting necessary social, economic and political transformations. It has laid the foundation to embark on a procces of national awakening, which is known throughout the country as Deshodaya. Table 2 gives the major principles relating to Deshodaya, or the Path to National Awakening.

Table 02:Path to National Re-Awakening (Deshodaya)



Deshodaya arises from the earlier development work in the communities. It is closely related to the earlier work. Table 3 illustrates this aspect.

Table03: Path to National Awakening-Deshodaya

PATH TO NATIONAL AWAKENING - Deshodaya

1. Establishment of spiritual, moral and cultural values at individual, family, group, village and urban community and national Levels.
2. Satisfaction of Ten Basic Human Needs of people beginning with the most deprived in society laying the foundation for a Right Livelihood society.
3. Bringing about social development in village and urban communities by intensifying functional development educational programme for:
   (1) Awareness creation and leadership building
   (2) Community Participation for decision - making

(3) Community organisation for self - reliance and self - government

(4) Community education for a global non-violent social order

(5) Protection for cultural identity and promotion unity with diversity

(6) Health development

(7) Conflict resolution, National integration and peace

(8) Full realisation of fundamental human rights for women and children rule of law

4. Re-organisation of the political power structure in the country on the principles of

(1) Participatory democratic institution and

(2) Complete decentralisation of power to village and urban Community level democratic institutions.

5. Re - structuring the national economy on the priciples of:

(1) National self - sufficiency with regard to basic human needs.

(2) Adoption of small scale dacentralised, labour intensive appropriate technologies for production purposes without destruction of nature of culture

(3) Replacement of existing production relationship with non - exploitative trusteeship relationship enforced by law with a right Livelihood Society in view

(4) Complete non-dependence on exploitative international economic relationships while promoting healthy interdepend international economic relationships to creative a just global society

(5) Protection of the environment and bio - diversity

I am not going into all the details connected with the above six sectors which have to be transformed. Looking at this chart I will briefly explain the significance of all other areas besides the Human Rights for a truly human rights respecting State and society to emerge.

Under the social awakenings section you will observe that one item on which we educated our workers and villagers were Human Rights and Duties. You may see how insignificant this subject is when it is compared with the other areas covered under social awakening itself or social development as you call it and still other areas coming under spiritual, moral, cultural, political and economic awakening or development.

It is my strong conviction that what our society or even the world is facing is a disease that needs a holistic treatment of the body, mind, emotions and spirit. We can never realise a true Human Rights respecting State or society unless we reawaken ourselves to all six sectors I mentioned. They are subject to what we Buddhists call Paticasamupada Dhama or Theory of Dependent Origination.

Therefore my contention is that you all must not ignore your responsibility as citizens of this country and members of the human community but become a part of the people's non-violent democratic process to build justice and peace everywhere.

As is implied by its name, Sarvodaya includes ALL. Its vision is global in scope. As a movement, Sarvodaya will expand outwards from individuals, families, communities and nations to the whole world. Tables 4 and 5 illuminate this aspect.

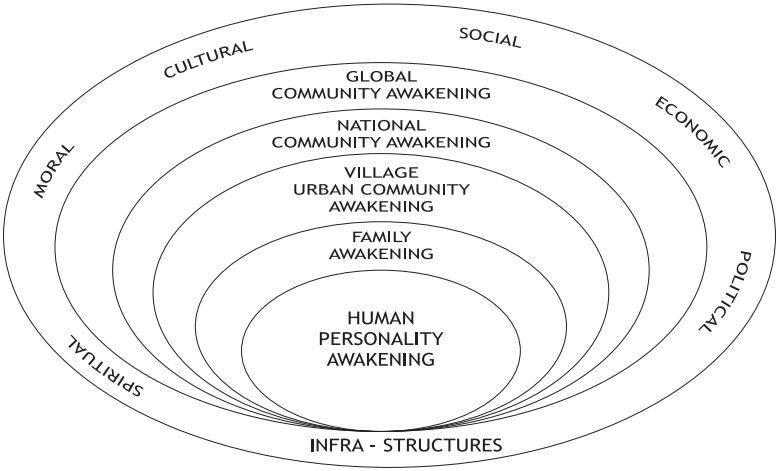
Table 04: Path to World Awakening-Vishvodaya

PATH TO WORLD AWAKENING - Vishvodaya

1. In all countries of the world, concerned individuals and groups initiate, promote and intensify Paurushodaya, Kutumbodaya, Gramodaya, Nagarodaya, Deshodaya and Vishvodaya movement according to their historical and cultural realities,
2. These individual and groups should build up a close communication relationship based on both affinity and vicinity and mutually support one another to build a no - poverty and peaceful society.
3. They should build up alternative but universal value - based
   (1) Living patterns/ Right Livelihood / Full - engagement communities
   (2) Production, Distribution and consumption technique and structures, and
   (3) Assist one another to break though existing ideological barriers and political boundaries to create interdependent just societies
4. They should show by example, how to build up non-violent defence mechanisms and oppose all forms of pilling up of mass destruction armament in their countries.
5. They should oppose all form of production that result in destruction of nature and bio - diversity, enslavement of women and children, increase poverty and bring about economic imbalances, pollution of the environment and psychological and economic impoverishment of communities anywhere in the world.

Table 05: A Global Framework-Planning for Awakening

A GLOBAL FRAMEWORK - PLANING FOR AWAKENING



BIOSPHERE	-	PORTION OF THE EARTH WHERE LIFE OCCURS
ECO-SYSTEM	-	INTER-DEPENDENT BIOTIC AND NON-BIOTIC COMPONENTS
PSYCHOSPHERE	-	SUM TOTAL OF PSYCHIC ENEGIES RAD IATED BY HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS
COSMIC LAWS GOVERNING HUMAN LIFE		

In conclusion I like to share with you some information about a forthcoming event. You may get all details and enroll yourselves for the event on the internet at www.metaconvention.org. Jointly with the Aloka Foundation and Meta Around the World of Malaysia/Singapore/Australia, we are organising a global spiritual event from 27th June to 5th July midnight this year. While we expect to join over 1.2 million people in Ruanweliseya, in Anuradhapura, who will gather for the pichchamal poojawa on the last day 5th July, the same night from 9:45 to 10:15pm, we will also organise a Meta vigil that will cover all countries through the internet. It is our hope that this event will help to create a critical mass of spiritual consciousness in our country as well as globally, which will contribute to peace and harmony.

Now, as requested by some of you, I will lead you into a simple and short meditation on Meta. Meta in Pali, and Maitri in Sanskrit, means friendliness or loving kindness towards all sentient beings. It has no particular religious connotation. It is a spiritual exercise that is common to all faiths and results in immediate benefits to the practitioners.

07

We Will Never Have Peace, Unless…

Alexander Mar Thoma Lecture, Trivandrum, India.

I am honored to be invited to deliver the 20th lecture in memory of Dr. Alexander Mar Thoma Metropolitan who was the supremo of Mar Thoma church. Inspired by him, I know how much time and energy have been devoted by Dr. Abraham Karickam and his colleagues to promote interfaith dialogue and peace nationally and internationally for over two decades.

These days I accept public engagements both local and foreign very selectively due to my physical weaknesses that have come about naturally with my advancing years. When Dr. Abraham Karickam's invitation reached me I thought that it was a good opportunity for me to show my gratitude to him on behalf of Sarvodaya Sri Lanka and accepted his invitation very willingly. We are indebted to him for inspiring and encouraging the young Sarvodaya Shanthisena leaders in Sri Lanka.

A good example is Ravindra Kandage who was leading over 140,000 Shanthisena youth all over country even when a terrible war ravaged our people. During those thirty years of bloodshed we implemented a five fold programme in conflict areas which became popular as the 'Sarvodaya Five R Program' - Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Reconciliation, and Re-awakening. In addition to this massive effort, Sarvodaya organized peace workshops, peace walks, peace conferences and peace meditation programs all over Sri Lanka. In all these, Ravi's Shanthisena played a critical role.

After gunfire and bomb explosions were silenced, apparently there came about an outer peace. Ravi and his peace army continued to work very hard to bring harmony to the minds and hearts of our people so that they could live together as Sri Lankans.

They are engaged in a unique healing process; helping and guiding people to transcend linguistic, religious and other man-made divisions. I am happy that Ravi accompanied me to this very important event and he is present with us today. I also would like to congratulate him for the special recognition he is getting today from the United Religious Initiative (URI).

I can vividly remember the initiation period of URI in San Francisco by the Episcopal Bishop William Swing in 1993, which coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter. Mr. Dharmasena Senanayake, a founding member and a Vice President of Sarvodaya, represented us in URI from 2000 until his demise. It is from him that Ravi took over. We are grateful to the Global Council of URI for selecting Ravi Kandage as its Assistant Treasurer. He is also a Vice President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka.

In the history of interfaith movement we cannot forget the epoch-making Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago in 1893. Swami Vivekananda of India and the venerable Anagarika Dharmapala of Sri Lanka made very significant contributions at this conference. For the first time, Hindu and Buddhist religious philosophies were introduced to the leaders of Abrahamic faiths.

I was fortunate to participate in the 100th anniversary meeting of the World Parliament of religions in 1993 in Chicago, and also serve on the panel of twenty presidents. From that conference onwards, the contribution that His holiness the Dalai Lama is making, in spite of being in exile from his own land of birth, to interfaith harmony and world peace, is unique.

When talking of interfaith activities and peace, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano of Japan, the great Buddhist Leader and founder of Rissho Kosei Kai and the World Conference on Religion and Peace comes to my mind. So does Prof. Glen Page of Hawaii, who conceived the idea of a Non Killing Society, and founded a Global Peace Movement which he still leads. At this time numerous Gandhian and other religiously related peace organizations also come to my mind. The Arigatou Foundation of Japan is today perhaps the largest global effort which inculcates into children ethical values from all religious teachings. On our part the Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka participated in all these and other peace efforts within the constraints of our resources.

Having devoted over six decades of my life to interfaith efforts, among other activities, to contribute to build a just and peaceful world, now I have begun to wonder whether we can ever achieve peace, how ever much we strive, unless we add a new revolutionary dimension to our traditional agenda. In this brief address I like to bring some of the thoughts for futuristic actions that come to my mind for your serious consideration.

1. Even among religious leaders who actively participate in inter-religious meetings, workshops, and conferences, etc, I find that the religious, racial, linguistic and even political biases which have been habitually cultivated in them from their childhood continue to prevail in their own personal, family, community and religion group lives. Thus a sectarian attitude remains hidden from outsider' eyes. It is this attitude that leads them to engage in religious conversions and discriminatory behavior towards others when engaging in humanitarian services, and a myriad of other deeds that prevent us from realizing the “One World One People” concept in real practice. Conflicts thus arise which can lead to violence and bloody wars.

2. Those of us who truly believe that we can positively contribute to harmony and peace among all people inhabiting this planet should first develop in our own minds and hearts a genuine friendliness towards all. Respect for all life should be the first principle we should follow. The commonly accepted word for friendliness towards all is Metta. I am coming from a Buddhist background and from our childhood we were taught to practice Metta not only towards humans but towards all sentient beings. We were told that those who want to attain the highest spiritual enlightenment should practice Metta – loving kindness towards all living beings “in the same way a mother protects her one and only child even at the risk of her own life.” We were taught to respect all religions and their founders. So I always tell my people with whom I work that they should try to extend loving kindness to all human beings at least, if not to all living beings. All our talk about religious amity and peace is hypocrisy if we fail to fill our hearts with compassion.

3. The preamble to the UNESCO Constitution declares that “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” Greed, hatred and ignorance hold sway in our minds, and when these negative energies reach a certain degree of a critical mass of collective consciousness, chaotic situations both man-made and natural occur. The racial or communal hatred promoted by politicians for their own benefit created a civil war in our country that brought about death and suffering to millions of people, destruction of valuable assets and impoverishment of innocent and helpless people who got caught in the middle. The lethal weapons used by both the government forces and the anti-government terrorist groups were manufactured by the five superpowers and distributed and sold by other big powers. So we can already see a vicious cycle in operation led by polluted thinking at both superpower and lower levels, making our peace efforts have no impact at all.

4. Organized religions have contributed very little to teach people to develop the greatest “power” in the world- the power of the human mind – compared to the degree to which they condition the minds of men with beliefs, myths, superstitions, fears, religious practices and prayers. There is a significant lack of meditational training which helps people to practice mindfulness, compassion and wisdom. Metta meditation and mindfulness meditation will help people (i) to purify their mind (ii) to overcome sorrow and lamentation (iii) to put an end to mental and physical stress and (iv) to attain higher knowledge, insight and enlightenment. In a world where wisdom is lacking, all the new discoveries, innovations and creations of science and technology will continue to be used for self aggrandizement by the powerful and the rich, increasing the gap between the haves and have-nots, and continuing to plunge human beings into never ending violence.

5. Organized religions have not only given little importance to the spiritual awakening of humankind - they have also become an integral part of an unjust political and economic system. As much as

multinational corporations and political regimes with vested interests are immune to the sufferings of millions of thirsty and hungry people, to those who suffer from war, climate change and other natural disasters, so too are most religious institutions. They are as much engaged in the materialist rat race as other power or profit seeking institutions. Collecting monetary, material and human resources and sending emergency relief to those who suffer is praiseworthy. But more than charity, what I believe is required, is a radical global view and local action to remove the root causes that bring about human suffering.

So far I have raised five issues, for which we have to search for solutions together. They are: (a) Transcending our narrow sectarian attitudes and honestly trying to build an inclusive community in places where we live; community awakening programs. (b) Educating ourselves to respect life; practice meditation on Metta - Loving Kindness. (c) Understanding the relationship between the big powers and people who suffer; real world education. (d) Engage ourselves in mindfulness meditation; cultivate wisdom and build it into a critical mass of cosmic spiritual consciousness, impacting on the psycho-sphere. (e) Global view and local action; horizontal networking using communication technology as well as meditational technologies.

We have to clearly understand how insignificant we are as persons and organizations compared to the global controllers of armament manufacture, advertising giants, media moguls, earth's resources, world trade, drug mafias, the underworld, terrorist crimes, world's wealth, governments and inter-govern mental bodies and so on. They are led by those who have very little respect for spiritual or ethical values, truth or non-violence, peace or justice. They may pay lip service at most to religion and peace, as long as they serve their selfish purposes. Whatever lofty ideas we may have for interfaith harmony to serve world peace, we have to remember, that in actual fact, these are the persons and structures who finally determine the state of the planet and the people living on it. In spite

of this reality we cannot remain despondent. We have to decide upon an agenda, like the five fold approach I mentioned above, and act within the limited area over which we have an influence.

Now I will very briefly explain how with Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka we have implemented these ideals. As the history our movement goes back 56 years, and we have progressively developed our theoretical framework from the experiences we gained by facing various challenges that came our way, this may not be replicable by others as a whole, but there may be many lessons we can share. Also we had the advantage of inheriting a two thousand six hundred year old Buddhist cultural background which recognized no man-made barriers based of caste, race and creed. So the Sarvodaya ideal of "serving all and awakening all" could easily take root in our country.

We started with one village. Then over the last six decades more and more village communities joined the movement. Now it is almost 15,000 villages out of about 32,000 in the whole country. By a series of basic human needs satisfaction activities, communities are encouraged to awaken their own potential for change for the better, based on self-reliance, sharing of labour and other resources they possess, with maximum community participation. They are assisted to form their own village Reawakening Society and get registered as a legal entity. They are further assisted with leadership training, skills development, micro-credit facilities and so on, until they get the ideal of an independent village republic of Gram Swaraj into their collective consciousness. However in modern states they are well aware of the fact serenity, peace, self-reliance and values that prevailed in the past are being destroyed by the invasion of modernity, ably assisted by governments and corporations. I consider Gandhi's best piece of writing to be Hind Swaraj, published in 1909, which vividly described this coming disaster. Now it is a reality. But in spite of this irreversible situation, people get inspired and courageous when they feel that they work for a cause to convert the world into a Commonwealth of Community Republics, as Mahatma Gandhi conceived. Who knows? This

may be the only way humanity and life as a whole will survive on this planet.

After the war ended Sarvodaya launched a three fold program for what we called national awakening - Deshodaya. Simultaneously we conceive to bring about a transformation of the *consciousness* of the people; of their understanding about *economy* and *power*. Under each of these there are ten programs (that is thirty in all) they are invited to implement. In the 26 districts we have formed 26 Deshodaya Councils each having 100 elected members and in the 296 sub-districts (or Pradeshiya Sabhas) each having 30 members. Thus we cover the whole country in our Deshodaya movement.

Finally, I would like to say that we are in a civilisational crisis. We may fail to see immediate results of our efforts. We keep completely out of power politics and going after wealth. The present chaotic world may not survive; it may take 500 years to get clear of it. Why not start now?

Thank you for your patience. May the entire living world be well and happy.

08

Sarvodaya Stand

Speech at the 58th Annual General Meeting of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.

Right from the inception of the Movement, our objective was to awaken all. We followed a nonviolent path to serve the entire humanity. Starting with Shramadana camps we pursued the objectives of awakening human personalities to the fullest, family awakening, village awakening, village self-governance, urban awakening, national awakening and world awakening

This awakening had to be achieved by improving the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political sectors. We have implemented numerous programmes to achieve these objectives. You may read in our Annual Report a concise report of what we have been doing. Most of these programmes which we have created and implemented successfully are being taken up today by other non-governmental and civil sector organizations and also by various government departments. This Annual General Meeting is being held just 18 days prior to the presidential elections. We have never got involved in party and power politics since our inauguration almost six decades ago. However, on two occasions we had to stand against certain measures taken by ruling regimes which threatened our fundamental freedoms on Sovereignty and Rule of Law. However, during the last 42 parliamentary, presidential and other elections we gave our fullest cooperation to PAFFREL (People's Action for Free and Fair Elections), to the Elections Commissioner, and to all organizations protecting law and order to ensure a non-violent and fair election.

During this election too, I request members of our parent body, the Lanka Jathika Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, 15 other incorporated national level organizations, and thousands of legally incorporated village level societies to ensure that a peaceful, just and fair election is held. Sarvodaya should abstain from taking sides, as it has done before. We have to cooperate with the elections commissioner and the law enforcing authorities to ensure voters cast their vote without subjecting themselves to violence. We always should work for non-violence and peace before, during and after elections.

This existing system of party politics does not suit our culture. This system promotes divisions, hatred, fear and ignorance in people. In this system, *Meta* - loving kindness, *Karuna* - compasionate action, *Muditha* - altruistic joy, and *Upekkha* - equanimity, cannot be developed. Therefore, we believe in building up an indigenous alternative system which is devoid of party and power politics, and promotes consensual, direct, participatory and totally decentralized politics. Ours is a system of evolution of democracy from below going upwards. We call it praja or gramaswaraj, or a village self-governance system. During the last five years we experimented with this system successfully in 30 villages in all parts of the country. Today in the 26 districts we have 26 national awakening or Deshodaya Councils. At divisional level we have 304 divisional councils. We are working very hard to bring about a transformation in the consciousness of people, in the economic system and power political system. This is our politics and nothing else.

We should honestly accept the following weaknesses in the present system. All of us involved in politics, social welfare and development should strive to correct these shortcomings, some of which are as follows;

i) Our failure to unite as one Sri Lankan nation transcending barriers of caste, race, religion and power politics.

ii) Disrespect for law and order. Suspicion people have about the impartiality of the judicial system.

iii) Suspicion in the minds of people of not having their fundamental freedoms like right to express and right to assemble.

iv) Inability of ordinary citizens to get fair treatment from government institutions because of politicization, suspicion and fear.

v) Increasing cases on the largest scale of bribery, corruption, waste and taking of commissions.

All partners should come to a consensus that these weaknesses have to be corrected. Sarvodaya will give its support to all parties who are trying to correct this. Historically it was the mahasangha who played the main role in correcting these weaknesses. Unfortunately mahasangha is also divided into various fractions which is a great disadvantage to the functioning of good governance

We respectfully appeal to them to unite themselves with other religious leaders and give an impartial and moral leadership to the country.

Globally speaking, the very existence of human beings, other living beings and even the plant kingdom appears to be in danger of being destroyed. The very life support systems are endangered - forests are destroyed, and climate change has taken serious proportions. Landslides, floods, droughts, tsunamis and earthquakes have become more frequent than ever before.

We have to be extremely careful of trying to use coal for generation of energy. We should completely oppose construction of nuclear reactors because this is a technology which cannot be controlled by human beings when it comes to nuclear accidents like in Chernobyl and Fukushima. We also should control the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and other chemical applications which have given rise to so many incurable diseases. Simple ways of living which we are used to should be promoted.

After the end of war in our country, infrastructure development is taking place at a very rapid pace. So is the spread of communication technology. At the same time we should not ignore the above mentioned dangers.

In conclusion I would like to mention that we are all happy that the 30 year war has come to an end. All parties who got hurt during this period should be helped to the maximum to normalize their lives. One of the main things is to heal the wounds created in the hearts of people. Sarvodaya will continue to engage itself in this noble task.

I appeal to all our members to do their maximum to bring about a spiritual and moral awakening of our nation.

May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with you!

09

Sri Jayawardenepura University Convocation Address

Venerable Chancellor and Venerable Members of the Maha Sangha, and other Religious Dignitaries, Vice Chancellor of Sri Jayewardenepura University, Deans of the Faculties, Heads of Departments, Members of the Senate and Council, Academic and Non-academic Staff of the University, New Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen…

Vidyodaya Pirivena, Vidyodaya University and Sri Jayawardenepura University are associated with a certain vision, culture and value system, and to my great delight I too have had the good fortune to be an integral part it. Both my father and my uncle were two lay students in the Vidyodaya Pirivena. At the invitation of Most Venerable Kalukondayawe Pannasekera Maha Nayaka Thero, I had the great opportunity of teaching Health Science, English and Mathematics in the evenings at Vidyodaya Pirivena for several years, while I was serving as a Science Teacher at Nalanda College Colombo. I also earned my first Arts Degree from Vidyodaya University in 1967. In 1981 Sri Jayawardenepura University graciously conferred me with a D.Litt. degree, and at the same convocation I was fortunate enough to deliver the Convocation Address. With this background, it is with great delight that I accepted the invitation of the Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce of Sri Jayawardenepura University to deliver this Convocation Address.

Those of you who graduate today are exceptional, as you have exposed yourselves to the society and other careers after your primary and secondary education - unlike the internal students, who have had a continuous education from their primary and secondary levels to the tertiary or university level. In a way you are more matured by age. You are more experienced by having faced the struggle of life and living, and by being exposed to the institutional structures around us. Therefore, it is my understanding that you are in a better position to relate the knowledge you received from this higher learning institute; to look at the physical, social, economic and political environment around you with a special eye, and to contribute innovatively to nobly serve the society.

Your university education will assist you to be a part of the solution to the problems of our society, rather than being a part of the problem. Therefore, as global citizens, I would like to draw your attention to a few of the global challenges we face today. In 1950s, when we were youth, some of our ideas were considered to be revolutionary. They included acting against injustice, violence and war; stopping environmental destruction and safeguarding the life supporting-systems; supporting persons and small communities fighting against the forces of dictatorial states and commercial corporations; speaking for social justice and human rights; and adhering to spiritual and aesthetic values in our lives. These topics, which were rejected by the power structures of that day, who defamed them as revolutionary ideas, have become the truth and accepted standards of today.

We claimed that a hidden volcano was beneath the illusory peaceful society of the day, as we saw that wealth and power went hand-in-hand and were controlled by a few, causing poverty and powerlessness among the vast majority of people. Due to the same reason we were sometimes branded as Marxists.

We had observed our people being led towards a consumerist society by the authorities who governed the society, and the production by the masses was being replaced by mass production (as Mahathma Gandhi pointed out). We were condemned as reactionaries opposed to modernization. When we opposed the application of extremely dangerous and lethal chemicals such as weedicides, pesticides and chemical fertilizers in agricultural production, then again we were condemned as old-fashioned conservative people who were working against the efforts of making the people self-sufficient with food.

At a time when the country faced food shortages in 1972, and Sarvodaya advocated for leaf-porridge as a quick and affordable way to fight malnutrition among children, pregnant mothers, the elderly and the sick, and promoted the concept of common kitchens, a very powerful minister

of the government of that day criticized the effort in the Parliament, mentioning that the people who talked about leaf-porridge despite the availability of milk-powder, were the ones who were trying to reverse the march of history. But within two months of time, a separate leaf-porridge unit was established under the Ministry of Planning to promote leaf-porridge.

We as the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, with our 57 years of history of service to the nation, always kept on saying that we needed to create a participatory consensual political system instead of the present politically divided and power greedy politics. The foundation of democracy has to be built on the sovereignty of the people, and not on a political party system. We have shown that direct democracy can be applied in each and every rural and urban community in this country in the form of village, city and community self-governance. We advocated for *Gramaswaraj*, *Nagaraswaraj* and *Prajaswaraj* system, that will secure and safeguard the people's sovereignty.

We have illustrated by action that avenues are open in this pluralistic society, historically founded on Buddhist philosophy and nourished by the values of other religions - to strengthen the spiritual foundations of communities, to expand the modern information and communication technologies, and for the devolution of power to the grassroots. We have shown that in such a system, the modern scientific technology can be directly transferred to the communities, enhancing their production, thus resulting improvements in their health, education and living standards. But many of such efforts have fallen on deaf ears.

The weakened caste differences have been revitalized by the party politics. The ethnic divisions turned into mass bloodshed and a long three decades of war. Not only the ethnic riots and war, but the bloodshed in 1971 and 1989, also resulted from divided communities and divided institutions in the society. It is rather unfortunate that the privileged class in this country never understood this reality. The so-called 'leaders' who

did not have adequate education and were concerned only for their power and money took the people's sovereignty into their hands and destroyed the life-support systems of this country such as soil, water, air, rivers and lakes and flora and fauna; weakened the rule of law; and also brought party political systems to a level that it was hated by the people. As a whole the total value system of the people was degraded.

By early 2015, the public consciousness was mature enough to reject the so-called amoral political and development system that destroyed our social value systems and life-support systems. When I reflect on the political consciousness of our people, I consider the decision taken by the people on 8th January 2015 as a historic awakening of the public consciousness. Everybody understood that there were limits to deceiving the people by spread of rumors, use of mass media, mobilized state and non-state personnel, bribery, corruption and violence, and spending millions of rupees. The presidential election proved that the energy behind the collective consciousness of the human community supersedes all other ethnic, religious, and party political ideologies, and it is the unseen energy far beyond the words spoken or written. I personally do not believe that the results of the presidential election were a defeat or a victory of a person, but rather an awakening of the public consciousness.

Public consciousness naturally stands for democracy. The public consciousness is also capable of understanding the difference between true democracy and false democracy. There is a limit to the extent that the false democracy can lead its way towards autocracy. When the critical mass of public consciousness is built, it destroys the tendencies towards autocracy and restores the way to democracy. The same pathway is open today ahead us. It is the duty of all citizens who admire democracy to protect this pathway. This is the best time to create new social, economic and political vision for the country that safeguards democracy.

Open your eyes and see the real world you enter. At least think of what you can do for the global issues such as global warming, environmental

pollution, deforestation and desertification, poverty, terrorism and war, the energy crisis and spiritual degeneration.

The task and responsibility of finding solutions to these issues largely rest on the shoulders of personnel who serve in the management, commerce and administration sectors. I believe many of you who graduate today will move to these sectors. The twin brothers of the politics that would lead to autocracy are the leaders of public administration and the multi-national corporates. I would like to stress to you once again that many of you who graduate today will move to these two sectors. Therefore I will conclude my lecture by proposing a set of guidelines which I believe you should adhere to when you serve as the guardians of a democratic society, and as humanitarians who deliver justice & fairness to all, and protect the rule of law.

Firstly, as the inheritors of the culture in which we all are born and raised, you need to be skillful enough to connect the scientific and technological knowledge you received from the University with the spiritual essence of your own personality, and deliver your services to the people.

Secondly, you need to understand the interconnected global environment you will be working in; not limiting yourselves to an occupation driven by particular lifestyle or service responsibility.

Thirdly, you should have enough self-confidence to not engage in any occupation that destroys the life supporting systems; for example the production of poisonous foods; the destruction of the lives of humans and other living beings; and the destruction of our value systems by the means of casinos, gambling, alcohol and destructive drugs.

Fourthly, you need to believe that the key to happy life does not lie in a blindfolded consumerist lifestyle, but in a conscious simple lifestyle, that brings joy to individuals as well as to their families.

Fifthly, you need to understand that the political and economic ideologies and structures of the present day society do not positively contribute to

solve the problems of extreme poverty, unemployment, or the divisions and dissensions within families and groups and the nation. Therefore, the theoretical knowledge and practical experience you received from the University and from the society, along with your innovative skills, need to be focused to create a new economic and political vision; philosophy, processes and structures that benefit all.

I hope you will pay deep consideration to my words delivered to you as a former student of this University; as an elder; as a person who served the nation and millions of people for more than six decades, without compromising the vision, policies and processes based on self-reliance, collective efforts and scientific organizational methods; and without being a part of the vicious political cycles. I congratulate and hope all of you will be able to bring greater reputation in the world to the Sri Jayewardenepura University. Permit me to conclude my remarks by offering my gratitude to the Staff of the Faculty and the Dean for inviting me to deliver this lecture..

May the Triple Gems bless you!

10

Ceylon College of Physicians

Galle Light House Hotel

Dear Doctors, Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen,

As physicians, you all belong to a noble profession. I too belonged to another noble profession, namely the teaching profession. When you are retired and leading a quiet life, when an old client of yours suddenly comes and reminds you of the services you rendered to him to lead a healthy life, you can imagine the happiness you get at that moment. In the same way when Dr. Lalith Wijeratne, an old student of ours at Nalanda College, suddenly appeared at my home and requested that I to attend this prestigious opening ceremony as the Chief Guest, you can just imagine how happy I was. Thank you Dr. Lalith. I remembered his brilliant school career, and his father also came to mind; a highly respected Peradeniya professor who had inspired me during the initial days in my work.

Now we are in Galle. When you stand outside this Lighthouse Hotel you can see the beautiful sea, the light house, Galle harbor, Rumassala hill, and turning a little to the left, the village I was born in, Unawatuna. We also can see the sacred Sri Pada mountain, and closer to this place, Mahinda College, where I had my education. All this takes my mind back my childhood and youth. Almost seven decades ago I was fortune to have familiarized myself in my village with three Buddhist temples, one Hindu kovil, one mosque, a Christian church, and all the religious practices, rituals and celebrations associated with every one of them - so much so that I could awaken my personality quite early in my life, to think in terms of one human family. Imagine a human race where a critical mass of the population places in their mind the ideal of one human family inhabiting one planet - what a change it could make to our civilization.

When I came across the world 'Sarvodaya' - a compound word coined by Mahathma Gandhi from two Sanskrit words ''Sarvam and Udayam'' - in India in 1956, I was reminded of my childhood Buddhist ideal “Sabbe Satta Sukhi Hontu” : May all living beings be well and Happy.

Ideas and ideologies divide people. A vision in which all humans and all living beings, the plant kingdom and all life support systems, are held with

great respect and protected and sustained, will bring all people together and bring about happiness and peace to all. Ideologies have resulted in dividing the world, creating two world wars during the last century. Even today armed conflicts are taking place on a big scale in nearly 40 locations in the world. What the world needs for Peace and Happiness, where the well being of all is ensured, is a common ideal.

This kind of holistic vision inspires one to accept truth and scientific fact. Similarly, non-violence becomes a natural way of life to be practiced by all human beings, human societies and human institutions. Acceptance of truth and non-violence as human values enables us to get away from egoistic emotions and mental tendencies, and to cultivate what one may call self-denial, which is the beginning of an understanding of one's true self.

Having accepted the well-being of all as our ideal, and truth, non-violence and self-denial as guiding principles, we could easily develop organizational forms and structures where our human weaknesses – such as envy, greed, jealousy and egoism - can be suppressed, and the maximum emotional and cognitive intelligence can be developed as a team. Thus we could collectively achieve results beneficial to us as individuals as well as to members of the team or collective. To me this is the only way to achieve both professional success and the awakening of one's personality to the fullest.

During the last six decades in the Sarvodaya Movement, we have applied this vision in social development and welfare missions pertaining to human personalities, families, village and urban communities, the nation as a whole, and the world community itself. Under each of these we developed hundreds of activities which embraced all aspects of human welfare and development, all of which as a whole invariably contributed to human well-being and peace in Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Over the decades I have associated with everyone from the lowliest and the lost in our society, to the affluent sections, and sometimes the highest

decision makers in the world, including those in the fields of science and technology, medical professionals and corporations. I have come to realize some hard facts, some of which I like to mention. It may hurt our egos and even sound discourteous when I mention them, but the bitter truths must be accepted and challenged if we are to survive on this planet.

Generally speaking, we have forgotten our traditional spiritual truths of impermanence (Anicca), non-satisfactoriness (Dukkha), and non-ego (Anantha), and replaced them with the concepts of permanence (Nicca), satisfactoriness (Sukkha), and egoism (Atta). Individually speaking, this change in our general consciousness is enough for us and our families, but when these evil qualities are organized on a national and global scale, the entire life on this planet is threatened.

These three forms of ignorance exist today, nationally and internationally, in a legalized and organized manner. Most scientific discoveries and technological innovations are utilized to enhance and promote this collective aggrandizement for the endless satisfaction of the five senses. This insatiable greed has gone beyond the corporate sector and has infected almost every profession including educational, medical, political, and all other related sectors.

Nobody can deny the tremendous progress that we in Sri Lanka have achieved in the field of health and medical services. As a nation we can be proud of you; our physicians who are as good as any others in the world, and all those who assisted them in the practice of their noble profession. In spite of all these achievements I have a feeling that into your profession too, the three above mentioned poisonous germs seem to have entered. Please guard against this tendency and never try to be a successful medical entrepreneur. Fortunately there are many physicians among you who are described by those who come to consult you as good physicians.

There is an excellent book written by Chade-Meng Tan. The name of the book is “Search Inside Yourself: Increase Productivity, Creativity and Happiness,” published by HarperCollins. The three principle people, now

world-famous, who inspired him write the book are Jon Kabat-Zinn, who was the first person to bring mindfulness meditation into mainstream medicine and mainstream modern culture, Richard J. Davidson who pioneered neuroscience, and Daniel Goleman, the author who popularized emotional intelligence. I have personally known all of them and have seen their work in their home ground, and have much respect for them as contributors to a new emerging world civilization. As physicians you have to step outside your clinic and surgeries - besides healing individual patients, the time has come for you to spare some time to heal the global society as well.

Why do I make this statement? While marvels of medical sciences are increasingly brought to our notice we should not ignore the ever-increasing number of new diseases that we have to deal with. Our hospitals, both public and private, are full of sick people, most of them lacking basic residential facilities, health care, medicines and other needs. That is one of the reasons why the noble medical profession is fast degenerating into a profitable business. As long as there is a demand for medical care, the market forces will step in from the supply side. What is the relationship that may exist between the increasing numbers of the sick, and the cause that created this situation?

Is it the increasing gap between the rich and poor? Is it the pollution of the soil, water, air, food and other consumables like alcoholic drinks, drugs and smoking? As long as producers, distributors and users of these lethal materials are permitted to perpetuate this vicious circle, sometimes with the active cooperation of political and bureaucratic supporters and collaborators, can we ever combat this situation by curative actions only? Look at the pathetic situation of those unfortunate poor people in the North Central Province who are infected with kidney diseases. Isn't that situation an eye-opener, and a cause for all those who stand for good governance to go all out, and remove the vicious multinational and local business gangsters' holds over our families? They, along with the political and bureaucratic collaborators who assisted them, should be dealt with

severely under the law. We should educate our masses to look at this problem as a whole; where bribery, corruption and lawlessness are all working hand in hand with one another.

I will conclude my brief remarks with the following request to you.

1. Most professionals including physicians seem to be working under great stress. Those of you who are not regular meditation practitioners - please learn to meditate. The mindfulness-based stress reduction meditation program introduced by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn is prepared all over United States both by patients and physicians.

2. Please spend a part of your precious time to educate the public about the causes that lead to new diseases, and join people's protests to flight the vested interests who pollute our environment and life support system for profit making, with least regard for human lives.

3. For planetary survival and the sustainability of life on this earth, the time has come for all disciplines and professionals to get out of their closed worlds and cooperate with one another, with the focus on survival and the well-being of all.

My dear doctors, thank you for giving me a patient hearing. Be healers of our society as well, in addition to the present responsibilities you hold.

May all beings be well and Happy.

11

Keynote Address to South Asia Partnership Sri Lanka

First of all, I would like to thank you very sincerely for inviting me for this very important occasion. Thirty years is such a long time but as we get old, we have a tendency to forget certain things. I remember the 1970 and 1980s as very innovative period in the sector of national development. During that period there were a few people who were not in the official government sector, but more or less in the civil sector, who had a lot of innovative thinking going on, and the Marga Institute happened to be one place where these people got together. I was also attracted to the place just to learn. I remember Mr. Chandra Soysa and Miss Mohiddeen and a few others getting organized to start the South Asia Partnership Sri Lanka (SAPSRILANKA) at that time. From that day up to now we have gone through so many decades of development.

And I think I told Dr. Tennakoon: If we continue on this, which is mass education on our irrigation and agriculture system, particularly at the village level, we all would have a knowledge so much more than my speaking. Why I say that is - please don't misunderstand what I am going to say - people are very fond of talking about mega things these days. Mega city Sri Lanka… everything Mega. Can you practice this mega thinking, at that tank, paddy field? You can't. So it is time, after sixty eight years of freedom, to come down to earth. To develop this country we have to start from the village. Only the village people can counteract the global problems that we are facing today; climatic, environmental and so many other problems. Unlike the days when we started, there are many of what is popularly or unpopularly know as NOGOs (because when politicians failed to do their jobs they always turn to NGOs [Non Governmental Organizations] and blame them). I know there are some NGOs who have hidden agendas. But most of the NGOs have contributed a great deal for the people of this country. Not only at times of disasters like the tsunami, but even at normal times. But most of all I think the contribution that we all in the civil sector can make is to give a clear vision of development to the country.

I don't feel it, but I am quite old, I think older than most of you and maybe all of you here. But I am young enough to still think, is there another way than the way we are trying to go? Of course the new government has said that they would like to establish 2500 Gramraj (self-governing villages). I have suggested that they should have at least 15,000 such units and not confine it to 2500.

Today most of the people in the world would like to participate in a development process. What SAPSRILANKA has been trying to do, and what Sarvodaya has been trying to do, along with so many other organizations in our country, is to get people to think: what do they want? How can they get what they want? But development has to be understood not only in the sense of material development. It has to be a balanced development. It should start with the spiritual component. Why do we live? Why do we do all these things? What are we taking at end of our life? Are we taking anything to another world? What are we talking about? What did we live for? Those are questions we have to inculcate in human beings.

The excessive greed that has become the motive force for most people in the world has brought about the current situation. The mountains of snow are melting down, and deforestation and desertification are also ongoing. Even today in our country, in the last few days we couldn't go out because it was so hot. Why? It is because of human greed - and along with greed comes hatred. That's why millions of people are homeless today in the Middle East. 62 families control the entire economy of the world. This has been exposed to the world by a lesser-known person who is competing with Mrs. Clinton to get the Democratic Party nomination for president of the USA. His speech is not given on CNN or any major channel; you can only get it through the web. I read that speech, twice or thrice I read it. What does he say? He says that we should not allow the governance of this world's resources, which determines the destiny of its people, to be controlled by Wall Street; that the control of the world by banking interests and multinational corporate interests should stop. Any US

president who ever gets elected becomes a tool in the hands of those people, and he said this must be change.

Change what? He mentioned that we have to build a new society in the world, where the foundation is not at the top. The foundation is at the bottom, with the people, with grassroots peoples' organizations all around the world - like the self-governing village republics that Mahathma Gandhi talked about. These should interlink around the world, and then only can science and technology, particularly communication technology, be used for the benefit of the people, to bring about more amity, more unity, more justice and peace in the world.

That's a man who is contesting to be the president of United State and he talked with a lot of authority, information and wisdom. But here in Sri Lanka, we are talking of Mega things. You must be thinking, what is this fellow talking about? We are a non governmental organization and we want to eradicate poverty and we want to give a place to the women. All that is fine. We all have been doing that. We heeded what Mahathma Gandhi advocated as commonwealth of village republics; that is what he wanted for India. Now that thinking is coming back into the mainstream of civil sector organizations, and there are lots of political leaders who have become sensitized, and who are now thinking, is there something radically wrong in what we are doing?

We should think in different ways. For example, I believe that the worst thing that has happened to this country is the curse of party and power politics. Can't we have a democratic system? I read in some of the SAP literature about a village where you are working, where the people make consensual decisions. Can't we give up greed for power and money a little bit, and think of building a system of governance where there is an opportunity for people to get organized not based on greed but non-greed; not based on party rivalries but based on unity and understanding and reconciliation? Now a new constitution is being built. But whatever constitution we have it will come to nothing if we get ourselves divided into parties and quarrel with one another.

That is where new thinking has to be generated in this country, by people who are not involved in politics, but by people like you and I who think of the general interest of the people of this country. You have done a tremendous lot of work in the SAP. I know during the days of Dr. Padma Ratnayake, I knew how hard she worked. Sometimes I argued with her; I said 'you are neglecting your health.' I also do this kind of work but I carefully look after my health. We work so hard.

There has been a very unjust and unfair attack on NGOs as a whole but I think we were all fortunate. We got attacked, but we escaped. How? I said, 'if you don't allow us to do our work we will take to politics.' I would never take to politics, but that threat had to be given so now I can speak. So we were left alone, although the resources that could help us work in so many thousands of villages were not allowed to come to us because of various kinds of regulations. Imagine the minister of Defense taking over voluntary sector; we were all under the Defense Secretary. What are these people thinking? What do they take us for? Do they take us for the kind of people who could not think and act in a reasonable way? We are not rogues. I don't have an inch of land. I don't have properties, no shares, neither have I given anything to my children. But I have contributed millions and millions to the people of this country with the help of those people who are philanthropic and charitable enough to support the peoples' participatory program. We have to find a new dimension where the government and the voluntary sector can get together.

Even the term Non Governmental Organization is not good. Because non is always negative. Let us think of a new term where we coin another term.

The term NGO was coined in the United Nations. I had other ideas and thoroughly opposed it; I said that the government should not be made isolated from the people; that the people and the government should work together; that therefore we should not have this government and non government idea. They did not accept it.

Maybe now the time has come, with a new government and with new thinking and freedom to speak and make suggestions: Let us respond to climate change, let us address the credit we have taken from different countries which we we are unable to pay back; we are in a very bad situation in these matters.

How can we make every inch of land in this country productive? 70% of the people are not fed by big farms. 70% of the people are fed by small farms world over. That means this talk about doing Mega things is just to make some people earn unfair benefits. I will only say one more thing and stop.

During my lifetime I have never seen such a level of degeneration of our moral values. I have seen even school children at cricket matches taking small bottles of alcohol and drinking. With all our economic development by the government and by NGOs, what is the kind of society are we going to build? We are conceived in a mother's womb, all of us. Three things contribute to that: a karmic force, the parents who contribute the cell, and also the environment where the whole process takes place. From the third week in the mother's womb a child can hear. Maybe the other sensory organs are also working while still in the mother's womb. But what does the mother see? Violence. So human being who want to join our society may be ruined in the very womb. We never take that into consideration; the interrelationship between the mother and the child. Dr. Tennakoon showed how water, air and everything is interrelated. So we have to think from the mother's womb up to the time we go to the next world.

Are we preparing for this? These are questions we have to contribute for people in government to understand, because those who are in politics have no time to think about it. They have to think about coming to power for five years. But five years from now there may be mass suicide for everybody, for the air is polluted, the food is polluted, everything is polluted.

The other day I was asked to attend a meeting on “Vasa Visa nethi ahaara” I was given 10 minutes to speak. The minister in charge came and whispered in my ear, 'sir can you speak a little less?' I said OK; he is the minister; who am I? I am an ordinary citizen. He finally spoke absolute nonsense for half an hour. I was a teacher for thirty years and I taught that subject. So I knew “Vasa visa nethi ahaara.”

I believe that even when we get handled by government we have to speak the truth.

Thank you very much for this kind invitation. I have been with you for the last 50 years and I will be with you until the very end. I wish you all the very best.

12

Buddhist Monks and the Politics of Lanka

I am honoured to have been invited to make a speech at the launch of Professor Suren Raghavan's book “Buddhist Monks and the Politics of Lanka's Civil War: Ethno-religious Nationalism of the Sinhala Sangha and Peacemaking in Sri Lanka, 1995-2010.”

When he met me to extend this invitation to speak, I told him that I was not able to find time to study this book in depth, which is an advanced academic research thesis. He told me that was why he wanted me to speak at this gathering - not to talk about the book in an academic sense, but to speak about the thinking behind Sarvodaya peace efforts during the last several years, which has had deep and strong participation of Buddhist monks in large numbers. Such learning according to him was needed to imagine a positive future trajectory of Sangha Politics in Sri Lanka. So most willingly I agreed to his request. Thank you, Suren.

Sarvodaya peace efforts can be traced back to almost six decades. For over two decades we carried out programs to prevent an armed confrontation between extremist Sinhala and Tamil groups. In spite of our efforts during this period, several violent incidents occurred which were instigated by political groups. The worst happened in July of 1983, when widespread communal violence took place, and several hundred innocent people were killed brutally and many others were injured. I was a helpless eyewitness to the 1983 riots and all I could do was drive in my jeep from Moratuwa to Colombo pleading people to abstain from violence, until I ended up at the Ward Place Residence of the President. This was in the early hours of that Black Friday morning and to my shock and horror I found an unconcerned and indifferent President refusing to declare a state of emergency, which certainly would have reduced the widespread violence.

We were basically a community development movement with principles based on Sarvodaya philosophy; founded on the three virtues of truth, non-violence and self-denial. These were in one sense primordial concepts that have taken different meanings in a modern discourse. But for us these were values true for all times. By that time we were active in

several thousand Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim villages. Immediately after the riots we decided to give priority to our Peace Program. We decided to call a national People's Conference on Peace and Unity, to be held at Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) in Colombo. The four principal Buddhist Mahanayaka Theros, other leading Buddhist Nayaka Theros and leading monks, heads of other religious denominations and community leaders of all races, were invited to this conference. This historic conference was held on the 2nd and 3rd of October 1983 very successfully. At the end of this Conference a resolution was passed unanimously known as The People's Declaration for National Peace and Unity. None other than Ven. Madihe Pannasiha Mahanayake Thero presided at this session. No less than 1500 delegates attended this conference.

(For those who are interested to know more about the Black July and after, may read my autobiography Bhava Thanha, Volume Two)

Numerous Peace meetings around the country followed the BMICH conference in October. All these meetings were attended by large numbers of Buddhist monks as well as Christian, Hindu and Muslim clergy. The biggest activity we planned was a peace walk from Kirivehera Kataragama to Nagadepa in Jaffna. Well-known and influential monks including Venerable Walpola Rahula, Mapalagama Vipulasara, and Ganegama Saranankara Theros, were present at the inauguration of the peace walk on 2nd December 1983. Dr. Raghavan's study focuses on Venerable Professor Rahula in a different light. Rahula Thero, as argued by Suren, is the monk who intellectualized the social engagement of the modern Sinhala Sangha. Also present were several hundred Christian priests and nuns headed by Bishops. Hindu clergy and Muslim mullahs were also present. Over 30,000 of us started the peace walk from Kirivehera and by noon reached Tissamaharama.

President J. R. Jayawardane, who earlier promised to join the inauguration in Kirivehera, arrived in Tissamaharama immediately after the noon-break for lunch, and he wanted to address the participants, for

which we provided him with the opportunity. He made a public appeal to us to postpone this peace march, as he had information from the Criminal Investigation Department that in a number of places on the way we would be attacked - and he couldn't provide the needed security. Venerable Walpola Rahula, Venerable Welletota Pannadassi, Mapalagama Vipulasara, Father Tissa Balasooriya and several others vehemently opposed his request, and beseeched us to continue the Peace walk. As the leader of the campaign I had to make the final decision. As I knew very well that the government was not cooperating with us, and that the lives of the peace pilgrims were in danger, I responded to his appeal positively.

A few of us, including the Japanese monks who were with us, decided to continue the peace walk, avoiding the main road and going through inland villages. We continued the walk to Jaffna through the towns and completed the event at Nagadeepa as we planned. All of us safely returned home with one exception. A young Japanese Buddhist monk wanted to stay in Jaffna and continue the peace walk beating his drum. To our great sorrow an LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) gunman came from behind him and shot him down. We had to go back to Jaffna and bring back his body to be sent to Japan for the last rites.

It was after this period that the LTTE turned to be an absolutely violent group, making most people believe a military solution was the only available alterative for the government, as the LTTE was a ruthless guerrilla force capable of not only attacking the armed forces but exploding bombs in buses, railways, public places, religious sites like Daladamaligawa and the Sacred Bodhi tree, and killing hundreds of innocent people indiscriminately. The LTTE was not showing any positive signs for a negotiated settlement. The whole country was engulfed in an internal war and none of us felt safe even in the South although the real battlefields were in the North and East. In an environment like this, those who could leave the country in the North and East sought refuge in India and other countries. Those who could not leave the country found it safer to live in the south among the Sinhalese who never harmed them after the 1983 July riots.

The civilian organizations like Sarvodaya in our continued peace efforts had to play a very cautious but risky role without being confronted by either side of the armed forces - the armed forces of a legitimately elected government and that of the LTTE which was an armed non-state terrorist outfit. In a critical situation like this we in Sarvodaya were not prepared to abandon our adherence to non-violence. Within the limited freedom we had in an atmosphere of war (from the 1990s to the end of the war in 2009) we continued with our peace seminars, peace conferences, peace walks, mass peace meditations, and youth exchange programmes - in all of which all three communities participated - Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim; along with Buddhist monks, Hindu priests, and Christian and Muslim religious dignitaries. However a number of our fulltime workers in the North, including the leader Kadiramalai, was brutally killed by the terrorists, while a few months before that his pregnant wife and her father were killed by the army in a shoot-out in which they were caught.

The primary motivation of our engagement was the Buddhist teaching on equality and compassion beyond all human differences or ideologies. We believe that the Sangha in Sri Lanka or elsewhere should embody such universal, or as Suren has introduced, cosmic ideological positions. But unfortunately such wider perspectives have been narrowed by ethno-religious nationalism on both sides of the divide. Suren's work introduces a new constructive analysis with the concept of the 'Cosmian'. To deepen our understanding of the current paradigm it is important to start a public debate in Sinhala. I wish Suren would take the lead.

We also implemented a special program known as the 5R Program by which Relief, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, Reconciliation and Re-awakening programs were conducted for the benefit of all victims of war without any discrimination. The continuous involvement of Sarvodaya before and during the war with all communities enabled it to continue its normal program of Human Personality Awakening, Family Awakening, Village and Urban Community Awakening National Awakening and World Awakening, while doing everything possible for national reconciliation. In

the long term this five-fold awakening program will give a new meaning and new practices to the Spiritual, Moral, Cultural, Social, Economic and Political life and institutions of the people. Only through such a non-violent revolutionary people's movement operating from the grassroots up and horizontally worldwide can we build a humanity where unity, justice and peace will be a reality for all.

The Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka was principally influenced by the teachings of the Buddha. It started as an educational experiment by a group of students and teachers at Nalanda College, a leading Buddhist School in Colombo, when they conducted a Shramadana camp in a socially ostracized and economically backward village in the North Western province. The public acclaim this effort received from the Prime Minister and the general public inspired the pioneers to take the movement into all areas of the country, breaking down religious, racial, linguistic and other barriers. No politicians, bureaucrats or other vested interests or even the media gave the co-operation this movement deserved for the unity, development and peace in our country. However during the last six decades the movement by trial and error has developed the much needed theory and practice for a people's participatory path to development in Sri Lanka.

Right through the evolution of the Sarvodaya Movement, Buddha Dhamma, or the teachings of the Buddha, provided the theoretical foundation, while Buddhist monks like Ven. Ananda Maithreya Mahanayaka, Kalukondayawe Pagnnasekara Maha Nayaka thero, Ven. Pandith Henpitagedara Gnanaseeha Anunayaka Thero and many other leading monks guided us in interpreting the teachings of the Buddha into modern day practices, to bring about unity among the people, development of communities, and peace in general. None of them gave a sectarian interpretation to Buddhism. They emphasized the universal nature of Buddha Dhamma where the entire living world was to be treated with Metta, or loving-kindness. Helping those who need help, which is called welfare and development work in modern times, were

expressed in terms of Karuna, or compassionate action. More than receiving material benefits out of service you do for others, the importance of Mudita, or dispassionate joy, was emphasized. When one does activities of this nature, not only praise and accolades but also abuses and insults have to be expected. Therefore Upekka, or equanimity, has to be developed by the Sarvodaya workers. So the ancient teaching of the Buddha known as Satara Brahma Vihara was interpreted and adopted in this manner to suit the modern times.

While the above four factors of personality awakening applied to individuals, Buddha's teachings of Satara Sangraha Vasthu, or four factors of group conduct was adopted by us. Those were sharing or Dana**,** pleasant language or Priya Vachana, constructive activity or Artha Charya, and equality or Samanathmatha. For any family, group, community or even a nation and the world as a whole, sharing in a just manner is much more important for peace and unity than exploitation. Similarly, the pleasant language by which is meant non-lying, non-carrying tales, non-cruel language and non-gossip were to be practiced. Non-killing, non-stealing, improper behavior and not consuming alcohol and drugs were to be understood as Artha Charya or constructive activity. Samanathmatha or equality in association refused to recognize any kind of man-made barriers such as caste, creed, colour, race, language and nationality.

During the first thirty years of the Sarvodaya Movement we conducted over 36,000 Shramadana camps all over Sri Lanka where the above mentioned eight principles pertaining to personality and group awakening was inculcated into the young participants; mostly school children. One can just imagine the impact these thousands of participants have had on their own respective Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Malay, Burgher and non Sri Lankan communities.

During the last three decades on one side a bloody war was going on while on the other side Sarvodaya was developing various social, economic and political institutions based on the teachings of the Buddha. This exercise was completely outside the government or any party political

organization. Buddha Dhamma was not only meant for the afterworld. While the final objective of a Buddhist is to break the cycle of births and deaths and attain Nirvana, still most of the Buddha's teachings were for the present. He taught us human beings how not to deviate from the Noble Eight-fold Path while struggling to satisfy our social and economic needs. Progressively Sarvodaya has developed programmes to demonstrate an economy free of exploitation, and how people's participatory politics of good governance can be achieved in the modern era based on Buddha's teachings.

Participation in Sarvodaya programmes taking place in thousands of communities to different degrees includes all ethnic groups living in this country. Those of us who pioneered initially were Sinhala Buddhists. But Sarvodaya was not rejected by any non-Sinhala, non-Buddhists. On the contrary they rallied round Sarvodaya as if it is their own. In their own localities they have adapted Sarvodaya to suit their ethnic or cultural life.

I am not going to hold a brief for Sinhala Buddhism. But I must assure you that the vast number of Sinhala Buddhists who have been associated with us in this movement were never communally minded. When certain rabid Sinhala groups were hurting Tamils there were others in greater numbers who were protecting their lives. It is true that there were certain monks who conducted themselves in a manner that Buddha would never have endorsed. There were a larger number of monks in the country who followed the true teachings of the Buddha and who conducted themselves responsibly. So I am not in agreement when anybody blames the Sangha as a whole for the wrong acts done by a few monks which were blown out of proportion publicity by the media. After the country fell under British rule, and even after gaining independence, to this day Sri Lanka has never had a government which was modeled after Buddhism, or which has accepted the Dharmadweepa - Dhanyagara ideal. Of course the majority of inhabitants were Buddhists. So when certain people say, “Oh! How can a thing like this happen in a Buddhist country?” I will remind them that we are yet to have a Buddhist form of Good Governance.

We have to draw a clear distinction between Bhikkhus and politics and political Bhikkhus. When the first 60 enlightened Buddhist monks were asked by the Buddha to go out into the world and be of benefit to the many, he instructed them to go in different directions with two monks not following the same path. In the same way, during his 45 dispensation the Buddha met the first 60 monks and thousands of the Maha Sangha who followed them, up to today, spanning 2600 years of preaching the Dhamma to every kind of human being they came across. They advised the political leaders such as kings and ministers to follow the ten principles of good governance (Sharing of power, Morality, Recognition and promotion of talents, Straightforwardness, Impartiality, Calmness, Non-hatred, Nonviolence, Patience and Non-revengefulness) throughout the history of Sri Lanka when Buddhist kings ruled the country Maha Sangha advised them. When Rajadhi Rajasinghe died and there was no Sinhala prince to succeed to the throne it was the Maha Sangha who called the Tamil Prince Kandasamy and asked him to take panchaseela and named him Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, a Sinhala king. The second chapter of Suren's book traces the historical evidence of such social engagements of the Sangha.

Ven. Pidapathika Saranankara and Ven. Hikkaduwe Sri Sumangala advised political leaders but never took part in power politics or held political office. The Sangha had direct involvement in the ruling affairs in Sri Lanka; the Mahavama shows such records. In Matale and Uva Wellassa, rebellions there were direct and indirect Sangha contributions. However, unfortunately the phenomenon of self-power seeking political Bhikkhus emerged during the post independent recent past. I think Venerable Maduwave Sobitha was one such monk who worked without seeking power.

According to the little knowledge I have on history of Buddhism, from the time of the Buddha the Sangha inherited the right to advise and guide the laity in the conduct of their daily personal, family and community life. When the Buddha dispatched the first congregation of sixty arahats

(enlightened monks) to preach the Dhamma he discovered to the people the Dhamma he addressed the monks with the following words.

''Caratha bhikkhave carikam bahujanahitaya bahujanasukhaya lokanukampaya atthaya hitaya sukhaya devamanussanam. Ma ekena dve agamittha. Desetha bhikkhave dhammam adikalyanam majjhekalyanam pariyosanakalyanam sattham savyanjanam kevalaparipunnam parisuddham brahmacariyam pakasetha."

''Go forth, O monks, for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit and happiness of gods and men. Two should not take the same path. Teach the dhamma, which is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end, both in spirit, and letter. Proclaim the holy life, perfect and pure."

These Words of the Buddha spoken 2600 years ago for the first batch of monks who took his message to the world are as valid for the monks of today and tomorrow as well. The teachings of the Buddha is how to be happy in this life, and if it could be achieved in this life it will continue into the lives to come, until this cycle of births and deaths could be broken and the supreme happiness of Nirvana is realized.

"When wealth is unjustly distributed poverty occurs" the Buddha pointed out in his Chakkavattasihanada sutra twenty-five centuries before the Marxist theory was formulated. This sutra shows how robberies, bribery and corruption and all other crimes are results of poverty. In the Kutadanta Sutra measures that have to be taken to remedy this situation is well described.

With the advent of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, beginning with King Devanampiyatissa who ruled the country with Arahant Mahinda's advice, the Sangha that followed made it their duty to advise and guide the King to protect the country, people and religion. When a king turned a despot or was unjust, the monks did not hesitate to advise the people to overthrow him. When a foreign power invaded the country monks were

behind the king, giving him all the support to liberate the country by driving them away.

When the two brothers Gemunu and Tissa had a dispute over the succession to the throne it was Ven. Godagattatissa who intervened and united them. It was Ven. Kupikkalatissa who gave protection to King Walagamba who was overthrown by an invading South Indian army. We would not have had a King Dhatusena if not for Ven. Mahanama. There would not have been a King Sirisangabo if not for Ven. Nanda. King Wijayabahu of Polonnaruwa would never have been with us if not for Ven. Dimbulagala Kasyapa. We would never have had a Perakumba the Sixth if not for Ven. Weedagama Thero. Similarly, Ven. Wariyapola Sumangala, Ven. Migettiwatte Gunananda, Hikkaduwa Sri Sumangala and many other monks came forward to protect our national identity, our country's sovereignty, the freedoms of our people and the Buddha Sasana.

Of course, right through the history of Buddhism there were individuals who donned yellow robes and acted quite contrary to the ways of the above monks. They simply sought worldly gain. In spite of some yellow-robed individuals posing as Buddhist monks who have conducted themselves by disgracing Buddha Sasana, the Sangha as whole have acted very responsibly as guardians of our Sri Lankan nation. I emphasize Sri Lankan as opposed to Sinhala Nation.

The Buddhist educational revival that started in 1841 with the opening of the Paramadhamma Chetiya Pirivena, founded by Ratmalane Dhammarama, followed by Vidyodaya and Vidyalankara Pirivenas, was taken forward with the arrival of Colonel Olcott and his contributions to Buddhist education. Beginning with Ananda College, Nalanda, Mahinda, Dharmaraja, Dharmapala, Dharmasoka, Dharmadutha, Rahula and so on produced a new generation of educated community leaders who contributed to national reawakening.

Again, we have to make a distinction between Bhikkhu Politics and Political Bhikkhus. None of the above kind of Bhikkhus about whose

contribution I spoke aspired for any personal benefit, material gain or worldly position for the sacrifices they made for the benefit of the country, its people and Buddha Sasana. The historic declaration that was made by the Vidyalankara Pirivena was a landmark in the modern period of Bhikkhus and Politics. This was on the 13th of February, 1946.

This declaration contained the following facts: 1) Alhough the Buddha permitted Maha Sangha to change certain Vinaya rules when they felt the need to so, Theravada Bhikkhus to the present day followed the same Vinaya Rules without change. 2) Bhikkhus throughout history while leading the life of a monk pioneered the protection of the Sinhala People, the country and Buddha Sasana. 3) Bhikkhus are involved in education, prevention of crimes, welfare, temperance and other social activities which may be political in nature but a Bhikkhu cannot be found fault with for engaging themselves in these activities. 4) While working for the good of the people, if certain harmful things happen going against the good of the people, the Bhikkhus have a right to oppose them.

The publication of the book “The Heritage of the Bhikkhu” by Ven. Dr. Walpola Rahula, a few years after the Vidyalankara Declaration, became very popular among the monks especially, the young. Suren has referred this book in his 4th chapter.

I strongly believe that the Bhikkhus should continue to play a guiding role in all affairs of the nation that affect the lives of the people as in the past. At present there is a multitude of evils taking place in our society such as bribery, corruption, alcoholism and drug addiction, robberies, environmental hazards, promotion of communal dissensions, party political rivalries, and so on. If a monk conducts himself according to Vinaya rules, possesses a clean character educated and well versed in the Dhamma, is upright and honest, does not succumb to wealth and power, is impartial, fearless, and fully committed to service of humanity and compassionate to the whole living world, such a monk will be listened to by people.

The most recent example of such a monk is the late Ven. Maduluwawe Sobhita Thero who campaigned for the abolition of the Executive Presidency, which was increasingly becoming dictatorial, corrupt and nepotistic. Without his leadership the non-violent revolutionary change that took place on the 8th of January 2015 at the presidential elections would have been unthinkable, along with the general elections that followed in August 2015. Unfortunately he is no longer with us. At his funeral tens of thousands of Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists came and paid tribute to him. Without being a political Bhikkhu he showed how much influence a real Buddha putra can exert on the political life of the country when needed. I believe that only with the participation of such Bhikkhus can real reconciliation and national, religious and racial unity be made a reality in Sri Lanka.

Suren's academic background, and his compassionate attempt to bring sustainable peace led by the Sangha is an essential contribution to understanding and approaching the task of peace building and reconciliation. His academic attempt stands as one of the key contributions to continue our search for lasting peace and political justice for all.

May the triple gem bless you.

13

Lanka Micro Finance Practitioners' Association 10th Anniversary

I wish to thank the Lanka Micro Finance Practitioners' Association for inviting me to address their 10th Anniversary celebration as the keynote speaker.

I believe that during this event, you will exchange many new experiences you have had in this field which may be useful to you in your work in the decades to come. I will place before you some of my thoughts on this subject for your critical consideration.

As opposed to micro-finance, we generally hear about macro-financial economic enterprises in our country and in the world. Sometimes I wonder whether the huge impact caused by macro-financial activities on our nature and society as a whole, leave any space for the micro-finance sector to have any significant influence over them. Please give some thought to this.

You all will agree with me that survival of life on this planet - survival of plants and animals including human beings - is more important than any other advancement we make to create a higher quality of life. When you look at the real situation of our common home, the Earth, and how we have managed it, we cannot be happy at all. It is unfortunate that politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen have forgotten the meaning of the word economy. The Greek philosophers combined the two Greek words "*oikos*" meaning home, and "*nomos*" meaning management, to make the word "Economy": management of our (planet) home.

The four basic elements that go together to make life, including human beings, have been endangered as a result of the kind of economic growth which we have pursued for the last few centuries. We have come to the point today where we talk of sustainable development. The four elements of which we all are made of - earth, water, heat, and air - are totally endangered in most countries in the world. Macro-economics and macro-finance have contributed to this process. Don't you think that we in the micro-finance sector also should consider to what extent we ourselves have contributed to this destructive, wasteful process? Politicians,

industrialists and economists look at nature as a mere resource for the economy, but really nature is the source of all life and not merely a resource.

Look at the massive destruction of our forests, our minerals, our rivers, streams and waterfalls - they are being destroyed by macro-financial economic enterprises just to supply raw material to fill the sea; to build ports, harbors, expressways and airports, and so on. The principle motive behind all these macro projects is making profits at different levels for the benefit of the already rich, privileged and powerful few. The illegal amassing of wealth by way of commissions, bribery and corruption is another facet of this kind of macro-economic action. Just imagine the difference it would have made to the quality of life of poor and helpless people if these resources were channeled to help them to satisfy their basic and secondary needs for a decent human survival…

Looking at this from another wider perspective, what is the ultimate objective of this kind of economic industrial development? From where do they get the necessary capital for these kinds of large-scale enterprises? It is not difficult for any of us to understand that profit is the motive of those who implement these kinds of large-scale projects, and those who liberally give loans, which are necessary to finance them. There is hardly any altruistic motive in these kinds of macro-finance enterprises which have taken over the entire global economy.

I believe I belong to an organization that was one of the pioneers in micro-finance activities in this country and perhaps in this region. I think it will be useful for you to know why and how we got interested in micro-finance.

The Sarvodaya Movement began initially as an experiment in broadening the educational sphere of school children. In order words, our objective was to link the school with the community, and thus to assist the personality awakening of students through community service. It was a program of study service, where you learn from the community while trying to share with the community what you can. Sharing of time,

thought, and effort (shramadana) for satisfying the basic needs of the village people was one of the primary goals, while learning from the traditional wisdom of village communities was another objective.

This educational experiment led to a massive island-wide community development program. Beginning with one village and then one hundred villages, it expanded into thousands of villages covering the whole country and beyond; transcending the boundaries of caste, race, religion, politics and even nationalities.

In community development work, the gifting or sharing of land, labour, monetary resources, traditional technology and wisdom were used to the maximum. As the Movement expanded, we realized that these impoverished village communities needed capital for the satisfaction of their basic needs. The necessary capital needed was found first by voluntary contributions of money, as well as social wealth; land, skilled and unskilled labour, and know-how. These voluntary contributions were not enough and it was decided that a savings program in the community should be started as an initial fund from which loans could be given. Then the Sarvodaya parent organization could guarantee for banks to extend loans to registered village Sarvodaya societies, based on the criteria they decide upon, to advance loans at reasonable interest rates for the needs of the community. We managed to successfully extend this program to 5600 Sarvodaya village societies, when suddenly on the instructions of the Central Bank, we had to abandon that whole system at a great cost to those communities. However, as subjects to a top-down system, we had to abide by Central Bank regulations. They advised us to start a fresh development finance company which is the principle organization of Sarvodaya micro-finance activities today.

Of course as a development finance company, we are doing a successful service, but I do not think that we can match the damage that is caused by the government, corporate and private sectors. They are going at a maddening speed for greater growth in the economy in money terms, irrespective of the unlivable environmental conditions their activity may

create pertaining to the air we breathe, the heat we experience, the water we consume, and the unpolluted food we must grow on a highly poisoned earth. Governments are always hand in glove with macro-finance and mega businesses, which they call 'developers'. These developers always consider clean and unpolluted landscapes - meadows, fields and forests - to be undeveloped areas. So the destruction of nature goes on as development. This is a criminal act which all sensible people should oppose.

On the other hand, the damage caused to society by way of destroying the cooperation, simplicity, sustainability, and spirituality which bring all of us together into one human family, is incalculable.

Generally I am an optimist. Under all hostile environments, we in Sarvodaya were able to survive. So even when governments, corporations, and private sector economic stakeholders lead us into darkness, we shall continue to build communities with self-governing villages. It is to these communities that we must provide capital resources for livelihood needs, health, education and other social needs, or what we call basic human needs. In the agricultural sector, with handicrafts and micro-enterprises, and in numerous village community service sectors, a micro-economy can survive in communities with a clean environment; where loving kindness, compassionate action, empathy and altruism will continue to remain as social values.

I do not know how many among the 70 members of your organization are funded by profit oriented macro-organizations, and to what extent such organizations will give you as micro-finance practitioners the freedom and space to make a real contribution to building sustainable communities at the level of people in this country, both rural and urban.

I know that no economic activity can run at loss. Therefore making a reasonable profit to sustaining your organization and staff is quite alright. But getting into the rat race that all macro-developers and financial agencies have got into - mainly profit making without any care for nature

and society - defeats the purpose of the very concept of micro-finance. Please don't follow the so-called successful banks who declare the large profits they have made after paying taxes. They are working for the benefit of their shareholders and not the general wellbeing of people and their customers. They contribute to the process of the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer.

Micro-finance practitioners should have foremost in their hearts the plight of the poor in our country. Their minds should be turned to the common sense feeling and understanding of the poor. With empathy and determination, a micro-finance practitioner can bring about a tremendous change in our society to benefit the poor and powerless people. The joy of living which such practitioners feel will be much greater than what macro-developers get by exploiting the poor as a market with propaganda and deceit.

Look at the prices of coconut, Rs. 70 to 90; arecanut, 70 cents to one rupee; betel leaf Rs. 3 to 6; mango Rs. 200 to 300; pineapple Rs. 100 to 150; lime Rs. 60 (now cheaper); guava (pera) Rs. 75 to 100; pomegranate Rs. 300; anoda Rs. 350; ambarella Rs. 120 to Rs. 160. Jack and breadfruit and so many other daily consumables can be grown in our garden. Micro-finance organizations together can bring about a vast charge in the country, by finding the needed capital for the above consumer goods with least interest rates; for small irrigation systems, agro-wells, seed and plant nurseries; or collection, distribution and marketing centers; making compost with foods scraps; promoting organic fertilizer; transforming waste products, and so on.

So far, I referred to the food sector at household level, but we have the agriculture sector as a whole in which a total transformation can be brought about by the micro-finance sector. In Sarvodaya we always give priority to help people to satisfy their basic human needs. These are:

1. A clean and beautiful environment
2. A clean and adequate supply of water

3. Adequate clothing
4. Food and Nutrition
5. Health care
6. Housing
7. Total education
8. Communication
9. Energy requirement
10. Sustainable and cultural needs

(These needs could be sub divided in to hundreds of sub-needs)

All of you are young and intelligent. Without resorting to immoral, unethical, or illegal ways you can make a great success of your life and your organization if you only think deeply about these basic needs, and formulate economic activities with communities who can be awakened with micro-finance provisions.

As far as Sarvodaya is concerned, we always keep the concept of 'a commonwealth of village republics' in mind for Sri Lanka when implementing human needs satisfaction at basic and secondary levels. We leave the tertiary levels of human needs. Unfortunately in centralized political and economic systems, power hunger and greed take control of humans, and they destroy themselves and others.

Greed of course will eventually result in suffering and fear; death and destruction. The sooner we come to our proper senses the better it will be for humankind and all in the living world.

I will conclude this talk by bringing to your notice the following four points which directly relate to your micro-finance field of work.

1. Managing triple P objectives: (Profit, People, Planet):

    Managing triple bottom lines (Profit i.e. earning profit for sustainability, People i.e. the social performance of the clients, and

Planet i.e. the environmental aspects) in micro-finance has been a challenge today. Achieving a social mission, based on the alleviation of poverty, has been a mere dream in the midst of so-called finance business players who exist for profit maximization. Granting micro-credit while aiming only at the recovery of capital with interest, without considering the socio-economic progression of the customers, has been the business of many micro-finance providers in the country today. Commercialized micro-finance and micro-credit has affected the rural households of the country in a variety of ways. Highly competitive, supply-driven micro-credit has resulted in over-indebtedness among customers, household asset depreciation, and social issues such as the informal blacklisting of people, families and even villages, as hardcore borrowers undermine the unity of villagers.

2. New policy development:

2.1. I am happy that regulators have made some positive changes such as passing the Micro-finance Act which was delayed for years. However at the policy level we should think of ways and means of protecting real micro-finance providers while pushing them to have a more customer-focused service.

2.2. I have my concerns on the impact of a recent budget proposal to not report credit information of loans below Rs. 500.000. This would definitely affect the decision making and credit sanctioning for micro-credit, as multiple borrowings from various micro-finance providers will not be visible. On the other hand, policy makers should make micro-finance accessible for low-income people who have not been catered to by traditional banking, by not pushing micro-finance institutions to demand high-end collateral. Lack of CRIB [Credit Information Bureau] status may push micro-finance institutions to seek collateral for credit sanctioning; this will not be beneficial to low-income people and it may be detrimental to the whole industry.

3. Excessive interest rates charged:

   I also feel that the very high interest rates charged by some micro-finance practitioners should be avoided; the borrowers should not be over-burdened with unsustainable repayments that will in turn adversely affect the whole industry.

4. In general and in conclusion

   Being the apex body of micro-finance practitioners, the Lanka Micro Finance Practitioners' Association has a pivotal role to play. It may also take a leading role in assisting policy makers to enact development-focused policies rather than blocking innovation in the name of regulation, and to partner with national and international bodies in order to bring in best practices.

14

The Path Deshodaya National Movement should follow for a Total Non-violent Revolution in Sri Lanka

National Deshodaya Conference, Vishwa Samadhi Hall, Moratuwa.

1. Introduction

I am thankful to the Organizing Committee of this Deshodaya national conference for inviting me to make a speech. You who have accepted the Deshodaya philosophy and principles and are assembled here have a great responsibility before you. That is when you get back home to educate people as to what you learnt about Deshodaya; to organize Deshodaya groups in every locality and village and to prepare them for a total non-violent national revolution.

When you organize groups for a non-violent total transformation of our nation, it is of great importance that you choose leaders from among the youth and middle-aged who are self dependent with regard to expenses they have to bear and who are extremely competent, and honest.

The main responsibility of those who give leadership to Deshodaya is to achieve within the next three years the supreme goal of Sarvodaya, for which we were struggling for over sixty years, without getting divided into caste, race, religious and political parties.

2. The main cause for the degeneration of our nation is the system of Party Politics

Please permit me first to say a word about the present politico-economic structure in our country. This structure where politics and economics are inseparably bound together, like the bark and the tree, is responsible for all forms of degeneration in our country. The very foundation of democracy - which is the sovereignty of the people - is destroyed by the party political system, which is at the root cause of all that is evil prevailing in our country. Those who embrace a political party like a religion will aspire for wealth, power, positions and publicity and in the process to achieve these, will not hesitate to commit any evil deed including murder and destruction of our natural environment. The vast majority of those who rule the country now and those who are struggling to take over power in the future are contributors to this destructive process.

3. Let us build an alternative Consensual Political System

All law abiding citizens who belong to middle and lower classes, along with those who have acquired their wealth by legal and just ways, together with those who are employees of the state and private sector, should join hands to build from the bottom up an alternative people's participatory consensual system of politics - where people's supremacy is upheld instead of the prevailing destructive party political system. The lofty goals - eliminating poverty; preserving our life-support systems, building a self-dependent economy without being subservient to any foreign power; ensuring supremacy of the law and a just and independent judicial system; complete eradication of bribery, corruption, fraud, and waste which is prevalent in both the state and private sectors; building and protecting a Sri Lankan national identity; and elevating Sri Lanka to be a respected nation in the international community - can only be achieved if we succeed in replacing the present party-political system, and radically transforming its ally, the economic system.

These days all media are giving big publicity to the story of a private businessman who fraudulently amassed billions from government resources and bribed large numbers of legislators and state officials on a massive scale in the process. This kind of criminal activity occurs because of a system of politics where professional politicians are bred and fed.

4. A Lesson from our History

There are lessons from our past history of self governance - both vertical and horizontal - which can be applied to our present political economy.

Though we hear the word self-governance very frequently, I do not know how many us understand its deep meaning. This may be due to the fact that we were under foreign rulers for several centuries, and even after we gained independence that servile mentality remained with us. When we were ruled by our own kings there was a set of principles he had to follow and another set of self-governing principles the people had to adhere to.

People's opinion did not permit the king or the rulers to disobey the ten principles of good governance and conduct themselves as self-centred individuals. It is not difficult to find instances when such misconduct occurred - and how the people were aroused and threw them away from power.

Today we witness numerous instances where after various political parties took over state power, they appointed unqualified individuals to various government departments and corporations, on the grounds of their personal relationships, party loyalties and bribes in various forms. We cannot forget how billions of dollars worth of government owned local and foreign assets were robbed or wasted by them. This party political system of governance left plenty of room for any unscrupulous politician to sell, mortgage or lease any government owned land, properties or institutions to local or foreign individuals or companies or governments by taking bribes or commissions. Unlike in the days of our kings these politicians did not have any mode of moral conduct or any judicial authority above them to control them.

In the same way kings had a set of ten principles of good governance, people also had conventions to follow, such as the seven principles of non-degeneration. Because of these conventions women and children were protected by all parties, even at times of wars. Temples, kovils and churches as well as their custodians, Buddhist monks and other clergy were protected. All contending parties never damaged public properties, tanks, irrigation canals, wells and such other common facilities.

This was not all. Not because of orders from above but because of the conventional self-discipline the village communities maintained, there was a natural protection rendered to awakening the personalities of children; to education, health, religious observances, national festivals, and to natural endowments such as rivers, streams, waterfalls, ponds and forests.

Today, like a cancer, party politics has reached every community - dividing people into caste, racial, religious, class and party political factions; so much that the old system has broken down, making it impossible to bring together all the people for an event that is for common good.

In short, when the king's vertical rule and the people's horizontal participatory role functioned, we had peace and prosperity in our country which we have unfortunately lost today after independence.

5. Dispel the alien mentality and Bring back National Thinking

It is not a secret that this balanced form of governance was destroyed as a result of South Indian invasions of Cholas, Pandavas and Pallavas, and later by the imperial powers of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British.

We should be cautious not to get into a false frame of mind - that as centuries have passed we in the present era have nothing to learn from our past history.

The majority of our present day political scientists turn towards the democratic traditions that started in Greece and then evolved through imperial powers such as England, Europe, the United States and Russia, to shape our political economic systems. While I do not find fault with them for that - as we can learn lot of good things from them while rejecting the bad - now we should look into our own history to develop and formulate a new constitution to take us towards a good governance.

6. Dedicate ourselves to revise the existing constitution and create a new constitution

Starting with and based on the Colebrook Commission, the Donoughmore Commission and the Soulbury Commission, in 1972 and 1978 we formulated and adopted our own Republican Constitution and now we are engrossed in a big national debate to change it too.

In my view, with the commencement of the Executive Presidential System in 1977, the system of party-politics started doing worse damage to

governmental as well as people's institutions. I also believe that this destructive process was expedited by the open economic system and the globalization process that we adopted during the same decade. Now the time has come for us to put a stop to the party-political system and look for an alternative vision and structure.

I would like to mention some highlights that have surfaced from the current discussions among the rulers, politicians and civil society leaders. Some of them are: Should we discard the present constitution completely and go for a totally new constitution? Or shall we continue to have this constitution with amendments? Should the executive powers of the president be totally removed, or should he keep this position with reduced powers as a ceremonial head of state? To what extent should the present centralized powers of the government be decentralized to lower levels?

My thinking is that whatever constitution we adopt, new or with amendments, it should address a large number of national issues we face at this time.

7. Let us understand the most urgent national challenges we are facing

- We have been an independent nation for over 70 years and yet together as a people - Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim, Malay, Burgher etc - we could not build a Sri Lankan identity.
- We the people have failed to acquire self-sufficiency with regard to our basic human needs, while our rulers greed is satisfied with an increasing tax burden on us.
- We have failed to provide access to clean drinking water, housing, healthy sanitary facilities and energy requirements for all our families.
- We have failed to provide human rights in keeping with the UN declaration.

- In a truly democratic political structure the sovereignty of the people is supreme, but in Sri Lanka we are passing new legislation to curtail the power of the people, so that the rulers can control every aspect of citizens' life.

- Because of the acceptance of a party-political system of governance, which is totally different from our conventions, we always have a governing group and an opposing group, resulting in a situation where no long term development plan can be carried out with common consent.

- The main cause for prevalence on a mass scale of bribery, corruption, fraud, nepotism, and etc. in appointments of unsuitable persons to high positions in the government and private sector; the main cause of waste and abuse of state assets, is the party-political system we have adopted.

- As a result of this prevailing political system the supremacy of law has been weakened and the functioning of government institutions and judiciary have become ineffective.

- While national structures should function for national security; for ensuring equal treatment of every citizen under the law; for auditing procedures to ensure transparency pertaining to government finance and all other assets - still no steps have been envisaged by any political authority to hand over more administrative and financial power to the three hundred and forty one Pradeshiya Sabhas and nearly five thousand Grama Kottasas to bring about better governance, welfare and development services to the people.

- Because we lack a commonly accepted long term development program, various ruling groups who take haphazard decisions to build new airports, harbors, high speed roads, megacities, and so on - regardless of their impact on our life support systems such as land, air, water ways, forestry, fauna and flora etc - are leading our country to be a highly polluted land, unfit for human habitation.

- Without taking into serious consideration issues such as national sovereignty and self-sufficient economy, or the need for a people's participatory development effort where self-reliance and our own resources are given priority, our country has become increasingly dependent on foreign loans (repayment of which will take generations) foreign experts, imported technology and even foreign skilled and unskilled labour to develop our country - with unimaginably disastrous consequences.

8. Let Us Educate People on DESHODAYA APPROACH

When we inaugurated the Sarvodaya Movement six decades ago we announced that our final objective was to bring about a total non-violent revolution in our country in an integrated way - in all sectors including spiritual, moral, cultural, social and economic life, so that all citizens of Sri Lanka will be entitled to a happy and peaceful existence. With regard to the first five sectors we implemented thousands of development and welfare activities in all nooks and corners of our country. These were categorized under the names *Purna Paurushodaya* (Total Personalty Awakening), *Kutumbodaya* (Family Awakening), *Gramodaya* (Village Awakening), *Grama Swarajya* (Village Self-governance), *Nagarodaya* (City Awakening), *Nagara Swarajya* (City Self-governance), *Deshodaya* (National Awakening) and *Vishvodaya* (World Awakening). During the sixty years of our service to humanity we never engaged in party and power politics. Neither did we show a special partiality to any politician. Therefore we were able to safeguard the purity of our organisation. We joined hands with governments when they did good things but refrained from supporting those that we considered to be harmful to the people.

While we never participated in any political competitions aimed at capturing power, still we contributed a lot to bring about positive and creative innovations to politics. Therefore we were able to generate a spiritual force in people's consciousness all over the country, transcending racial religious class and political divisions.

When we looked at the state of affairs to which our country has fallen, we decided to come forward to find an alternative to the political and economic systems. Our non-violent revolution will be completed only when people enjoy sovereignty, and where a political economy is functional in a way beneficial to the people, both vertically and horizontally.

When we look at the complex and confused nature of our country at present, this is not an easy task. All those institutions at the national level - governmental and private sectors, large business enterprises, media and religious institutions - will not support a transformation of this nature; because they would lose the privileged positions they hold today. When slavery was to be abolished and chains were removed from the legs and hands of slaves, some slaves opposed it. Today our people have the same slavish mentality. They are under the false impression that democracy cannot function without parties; that there is no way to build self governance and just economy from below; that to build our country we need investors and experts and capital and science and technology from abroad. All these false ideas should be erased from the minds of people. Deshodaya Movement should liberate people from this slavish mentality.

9. Five Fold Deshodaya Path

Without violating the existing laws of the country, Deshodaya wants to bring about this radical transformation. There are four levels at which people should be empowered by Deshodaya. It is not the Deshodaya intention to become another gang of politicians who have a hidden agenda to capture state power but do not have any spiritual or moral foundation. On the contrary, the Deshodaya Movement is opening opportunities for individuals, families, village communities and the national community as a whole, to participate in this total non-violent transformation, to be followed up by a fifth step where the people will have a clear manifesto of principles and a program for good governance.

These Principles and the Program can be implemented by democratically chosen people's leaders themselves from bottom up: village to district, district to national level and national to international level. In this process there will be no space for power or party politics at any level. The party political system will be pushed to past history. Deshodaya members will learn how this could be done in the fifth part of this paper.

10. I will take the first step beginning with myself to build a compassionate Sri Lanka.

I. I am a citizen of the Republic of Sri Lanka.

II. I treat all fellow citizens with equal respect.

III. I believe that all citizens should receive equal justice before the law, and that together we can build a Sri Lankan identity.

IV. While I accept the fact that Sri Lankan civilization evolved over 2500 years, I pledge to uphold its universal nature for the future.

V. I accept that the main pillar of the Sri Lankan civilization was Buddhist culture. The symbols of that civilization were the irrigation Reservoir, Pagoda, Village and the Temple. I know that Sri Lanka was known the world over as the Island of Righteousness and the Granary of the East.

VI. I realize that the essence of Sri Lankan culture is respect for all life including human beings, animals, the plant kingdom, and nature as a whole.

VII. Because of this value system cherished by Sri Lankans, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers, who settled in this country from time to time were can be integrated into national life as equals while protecting their own customs, beliefs, languages etc.

VIII. It is my belief that the Sinhala Buddhists will remain true to Sinhala Buddhism as long as they preserve this great quality. If

Sinhala Buddhism becomes a decorative label then I have no doubt Sinhala Buddhists will degenerate into a weak community. Local racist groups acting with outside forces can easily destroy that quality which kept all our people bound together as one nation.

IX. A small group of Sinhala Buddhists who try to keep a separate superior identity truly contribute to the destruction of this noble quality of Sri Lankan Buddhist culture. This in no time contributes to the nation being divided into majority and minority communities; thus bringing about racial conflicts, sometimes leading to violence and bloodshed. I reject the usage of terms like minority and majority, multi-racial, multi-religious and accept the ancient concept of One Country One People. Really I am a strong believer in the concept of One World One People.

X. While I protect my racial and religious identity, my fundamental duty is to protect my Sri Lankan national identity first. I believe that we shall learn Sinhala, Tamil and English languages.

XI. I accept all communities in Sri Lanka as one national family and I will not discriminate against any Sri Lankan Tamil, Muslim, Malay or Burgher group in my economic, social, or political relationships.

XII. I will never be a participant in any racial or religious conflict; I will never be a party to violence in any political or economic activities, and will stand up firmly for unity and peace.

XIII. I will be a life-long participant in the struggle to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, ill-health and evil practices from all people in my country, and thus build a united and peaceful Sri Lanka.

XIV. I will be a participant in building a model Sri Lanka which will show the way to all human society - to combat climate change,

the use of atomic and nuclear weapons, fundamentalism, and conflicts caused by religious, linguistic, racial and other divisions.

X. I shall not allow any thought that goes contrary to Sarvodaya, or Awakening of All, to enter my mind. I will always abide by the principles of Truth, Non-violent and Self-denial.

11. From my family we take the second step to build a compassionate Sri Lanka.

I. We wake up at 5 am in the morning and practice at least 5 minutes of meditation on loving kindness on ourselves and all beings before getting down from the bed.

II. Next, after taking a cup of tea, we do our ablutions and then do the religious observances in our shrine room.

III. We consume a simple meal in the morning such as leaf-porridge, milk rice, hoppers, string hoppers, cereals, manioc, sweet potato, chapathi, idli, dosai, etc.

IV. As a daily routine we all participate in cleaning our bed, sweeping the house, cleaning the compound, watering the plants, etc.

V. We spend some time to clean the environment; to prevent mosquitoes from breeding; to cultivate every possible inch of land with vegetables, fruits, edible leaves and flowering plants without applying chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

VI. As individuals we practice the four principles of Personality Awakening, namely, Loving Kindness, Compassionate Action, Altruistic Joy, and Equanimity. And as a family, we practice the four principles of group awakening, namely, Sharing, Pleasant Language, Constructive Actions and Equality.

VII. We use the resources we have in the family not to satisfy our greed but to meet our needs, and we abstain from spreading untruth, spreading rumors, hate speech and gossip in our family.

VIII. All of us in our family abstain from consuming alcoholic drinks, drugs, smoking, gambling, immoral forms of entertainment and wasteful expenses, and every member of the family maintains a savings account.

IX. While we live according to our own religious teachings, we treat followers of all religions with equal respect. We believe that learning the essence of each other's religions helps us to built religious amity.

X. We completely abstain from gossiping about caste, or any other racial, religious, political and other worthless issues in our family, while we welcome all who visit our home with equal respect.

XI. The noon meal at our home is simple, but nutritious and is mainly vegetarian.

XII. We expose ourselves in a very restricted way to the media such as the radio, television, newspapers and websites to be in touch with what is happening within our country and the outside world and to gain new knowledge. But we abstain from listening to news and programs which engage in untruth, abuse, slander, gossip and hate promoting talks, promoting power hungry politicians with their hidden political agendas.

XIII. We believe that to keep our body and mind healthy we need to have a clean and beautiful environment. Therefore we spend lot of our time to keep the home gardens and surroundings clean and grow useful plants.

XIV. There are other families living in our locality and we believe in community life. Their physical cleanliness as well as inner

qualities built on high morality and good practices help the community to be free from anti-social activities. So we actively participate in voluntary social work organizations and encourage our children to engage themselves in cultural, literary, sports and religious activities.

XV. As a family as well as a community we put in our maximum effort to do our duties and fulfill our responsibilities to rebuild mother Sri Lanka as an Island of Righteousness and a Granary of the East.

12. We commence the third step to build a compassioate Sri Lankan nation from our own (village) community.

I. Our village community believes that a progressive and sustainable national society can be built if we have the right vision and principles in our spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political lives. We should inculcate them in our personal, family and community life.

II. The essence of our ancient culture which developed over 2500 years was to extend Loving Kindness to all living beings and protect them. Because of this great quality, all those who immigrated to Sri Lanka over the course of time became an integral part of our nation. Some of them reside in our community and we must all live together peacefully as one community with equal rights.

III. The majority of people living in our village are poor and middle class families, while there are a few so-called well-to-do, respectable and powerful families. They must all actively participate in all the religious and cultural activities of the community without any discrimination. While we wish for a harmonious status quo yet we are very concerned about improving the living conditions of the poor.

IV. We believe that Ten Basic Human Needs should be satisfied for every family in the community. These are:

i. A Clean and Beautiful Environment

ii. Sufficient Clean Water

iii. Basic Clothing

iv. A Balanced Diet

v. Health Facilities

vi. Minimum Housing for All

vii. Minimum Access to Communication Facilities

viii. Sufficient Energy

ix. Total Education including Primary and Secondary and vocational

x. Cultural and Spiritual Needs.

V. Because all our problems are connected with the problem of poverty, we expect the rich, the landowning class and all the powerful people of our community to come forward and help to solve this problem - failing which we cannot hesitate to get the government to intervene to obtain a small parcel of land for every family and other necessities to satisfy their Basic Human Needs.

VI. We are happy that there are even a handful of rich families in our village who do not show off their wealth with extravagant lifestyles - wedding ceremonies and such functions - but instead wisely and magnanimously spend a part their wealth to improve the livelihoods of the poor, their children's education, housing and so on.

VII. “Earn by rightful ways. Spend one fourth of what you earn for your daily living. Invest two-thirds in the industry or occupation you are engaged in. Save the remaining one fourth for an emergency.” This is a traditional lesson we learnt in the Dhamma School in our village. So we have a Savings Society in our village which provides its members the small capital they need. We get guidance from the Sarvodaya Development Finance Company for its operations.

VIII. Traditionally our villagers followed what was known as Seven Factors of Non-degeneration. They are: to meet as frequently as possible as a community, to meet peacefully to discuss peacefully and disperse peacefully, to ensure the safety and welfare of children and women, to look after the elderly with care and respect, to continue to hold the traditional ceremonies in the village, and to invite Spiritual leaders and the learned to the village and learn from their wisdom. Even today we try to uphold these traditions.

IX. In our village we carry out programs to educate young couples before marriage, expectant mothers and their husbands - a training program known as “A Righteous Approach to Motherhood,” which aims to help the child in the mother's womb to develop as a wholesome personality.

X. From the day a child is born up to two and a half years of age we carry out a day care program for the infants, followed by a Singithi Hamuwa or preschool program for children from two and a half years to five years. Both these programs are carried out under the supervision of the Village Mothers' Society by a trained staff. These programs ensure nutrition, good health, physical and psychological stability of our children.

XI. We are very keen to send our children to Dhamma School which is generally conducted in our places of religious worship. We

have facilities to provide children to learn Sinhala, Tamil and English from preschool days. We have a Childrens' Group and a Mothers' Group in our village.

XII. By encouraging and assisting youth to organize themselves into youth groups and clubs to promote libraries, all forms of sports, etc, we provide opportunities to constructively use their free time. We provide them with opportunities to master traditional skills of the community.

XIII. The government has appointed a large number of officers at the Pradeshiya Sabha level who are generally idle, or who have become tools in the hands of politicians; sometimes even getting used to bribery and corruption. We are doing our very best to get them constructively involved with farmers, craftsmen, entrepreneurs, the self-employed and our social work organizations; thus bridging the gap between the government services and the people.

XIV. It is our conviction that power oriented party-politics is the main cause of the destruction of our nation and we try our very best to prevent political conflicts in our village. We also strive to combat - in all possible ways, especially by awakening people's consciousness - the waste, corruption, hypocrisy, bribery and injustice that have crept like a cancer into all our public institutions such as government service, police, and judiciary due the menace of party-politics.

XV. To realize the lofty ideal of democracy, the essence of which is sovereignty of the people, we believe, the only way is transforming Sri Lanka into a Commonwealth of Self-governing Village Republics, as advocated very clearly for over 60 years by the Sarvodaya Movement.

13. The fourth step in building a compassionate Sri Lanka as a one nation is as follows.

Following the first three steps as individuals, families and communities, the fourth step will be taken as a nation: As Sri Lankans, to create a full non-violent revolution in the country to change the prevalent political system completely.

I. To introduce an alternative participatory democratic political system by educating the public about the destructive nature of party politics, through a robust national movement.

II. Eradicating the misconception that democracy cannot function without political parties; and convincing the public that the democratic base of this country is destroyed by the party political system, is included as the first step in the Deshodaya agenda. It is revealed through media how business magnates bribed hundreds of leaders in political parties.

III. Why our people still fail to truly think as one nation is due to segregation (by nationality, creed, class and religion) promoted through party politics. This needs to be wiped out from people's perception within a year.

IV. We at Deshodaya will unite with those courageous institutes and individuals who reveal corruption to the world - such as mass scale bribery, bad governance, destruction of public wealth and resources, and environmental pollution, which occur with the protection of political parties that come to power from time to time.

V. We will act on creating a public conception of completely liberating from political influence the individuals and institutes whose responsibility is to protect law and order.

VI. We will pressure the authorities to strongly act against the politically powerful - who protect illegal narcotics producers,

distributors and sellers, along with prostitution, holders of illegal weaponry and gamblers.

VII. We will pressure the government to enforce the highest punishment applicable under the law for the offences on misuse of public funds, including the Central Bank bond scam.

VIII. We will conduct research into the gaps that allowed the politicians, high government officials and private officials to execute such large scale financial frauds and will advise on corrective action.

IX. As citizens of this country we will change the constitution to save tens of millions of public funds spent on the provincial governors system and presidential, prime ministerial and ministerial advisors, who we consider as parasitic individuals and institutes.

X. We believe the power to create laws should be with the Parliament while as local governance bodies, Municipal councils, Urban councils, Divisional councils and Village councils also called grama swarajya are sufficient to maintain good governance in this country. We also believe that increased funds and power should be deployed to these local governing bodies and we accept that a fundamental reform should occur in the provincial council system.

XI. We believe that when competing through public election to be nominated to all institutions, including the Parliament, all benefits given to political parties should be repealed and all legitimate institutes and citizens' organizations should be given equal benefits by reforming the constitution.

XII. We believe, when considering the development of education and communication technology in our country, that complete decentralization is possible in all administrative and economic institutes. Therefore, as a national people's organization we

strive to transform the Republic of Sri Lanka into a Commonwealth of Village Republics. Such a decentralized administrative system should xemplify the truth that “people hold the sovereignty of a democracy”.

XIII. The major proportion of national income should be distributed to village level units - grama swarajya or self-governing village republics - with a radical reorganization that cascades power to the community level. As a result it is certain that through self-development via self-reliance and community participation, a new agricultural export avenue will be opened by developing a new agricultural economy resulting also in a nutritionally self-sufficient nation. Further, development of industrial products that fulfill basic needs will lead to a discovery of a new export market. There will be no need for the university and vocational institute students to chase after politicians looking for government jobs any more, with the new required changes to be implemented in higher education sector. The migration from villages to cities will thus be reduced.

XIV. With these propositions, major structural changes will be required in finance institutes such as the Central bank. These institutes should be free from individual and institutional international influence and should focus directly and fearlessly on the betterment of Sri Lanka in accordance with the constitution. We are aware of the immense difficulty of such a change as the activities of previous governments have gradually converted the country into a highly indebted nation. But this is no reason for getting discouraged. We need to take these steps with courage.

XV. We believe that foreign debt taking should be stopped immediately. Bringing in foreign direct investors to this country under the pretense of creating job opportunities should also be stopped. We should not forget that our people are intelligent enough to understand that they are capable of achieving

national development via self-infused capital, found through letting go of a luxury life and by conforming to a simple life style.

XVI. It is our idea that an independent commission should be established to evaluate the current foreign investment projects with authority to propose required changes that benefits the country.

XVII. We are a country blessed with natural splendor. But the natural environment is being irreversibly destroyed through the Port City project, the project converting Colombo in to a commercial super city, the Hambanthota port, the new airports and the large scale express highways. This Mega Mentality should be immediately wiped from the minds of the leaders of this country. If not our country will inevitably become a polluted desert. The foolish, unpatriotic, inappropriate acts of our leaders in leasing this country's lands over long terms to foreign countries which are irreversible even at this stage, should be prevented for the sake of our future generations.

XVIII. We trust in an impartial and robust judicial system. It should function equally at every level island-wide. The President, the ministers and the people should be equally subordinate to the judicial system. The constitution should be reformed to enable this.

XIX. The provision made by the present constitution to appoint a Constitutional Council chaired by the Speaker which is empowered to recommend to the President the appointment of persons to high positions in the Judiciary, members of the Police Commission, Public Service Commission , Bribery Commission and so on is a very progressive one. However, we believe, the present powers vested in the Constitutional Council should be extended to other large government institutes such as the Central bank, Sri Lankan Airlines, Sri Lanka Insurance Corporation, Public Trustee, and to institutes which are

subjected to political influences such as National Child Protection Authority that addresses child abuse and the Dangerous Drug Control Board. We believe by establishing a special office, a board of officials with increased power within the Constitutional Council, a true good governance mechanism could be formed.

XX. The entire education system requires reformation and every education institute should enroll students from all races and religions safeguarding their identity and should allow studies in all three official languages Sinhala, Tamil and English.

XXI. All parties that spread religious unrest, ethnic rivalries and hatred should be punished under the law. Strong punishments under law should be inflicted upon those who act unethically, irreligiously or illegally, parading publicly under the guise of a religious costume. Under the advice of different religious leaders, action should be taken on people from different religions who act in a corrupt manner in the society.

XXII. Amidst all the other national issues we have to sort out, we should not ignore the importance of nurturing the aesthetics of culture, literature, art and crafts, dancing and music as essential components to a prosperous nation.

XXIII. Our foreign diplomatic service sector has reached a new low at the present time due to political influences. Our foreign embassies are devoid of intellectuals and educated people. A complete reorganization is urgently needed here.

XXIV. Even under the present so called good governance concept, different media act with hidden agendas to promote private objectives of hoarding wealth and political bias, paying no heed to the welfare of the nation. We are all for freedom of media, however, we advocatethe establishment of a media training center which will give prominence to media ethics and using modern mass communication science. Alternative avenues have

to be explored to give voice to people's opinions. We believe the leaders of media organizations would understand this message we try to convey as citizens of Sri Lanka. We request the media to be part of our nonviolent revolution aiding with due respect, veracity and creativity.

XXV. We request very cordially from private businesses and commercial corporations to evaluate this document very carefully. If we do not act immediately no one will be able to save our nation from economic, social and moral downfall.

XXVI. There is a need to combine the Department of Irrigation, the Department of Agriculture, the National Water Supply, the Drainage Board and all other government departments managing water resources and under their collective leadership plan and implement a two year-long mass scale national level project trickling down to the private consumer level with focus on tanks, damns, ponds, water ways and wells used for home gardening and cultivation with community participation from the divisional secretariat level. The machinery required and the finances have to be dispersed for this decentralized project. Another, similar national mass scale project with the participation of the local community can be implemented within two years to fulfill village needs such as by-roads, bridges, viaducts and canals.

XXVII. The criminals who are convicted of corruption, murder, theft, crimes, child abuse, rape, and or misuse of government resources must be punished under a just judicial system regardless of official ranks.

XXVIII. With the above national project clearly in mind, Deshodaya units in every village and institute should plan and operate to the maximum possible extent. But until party politics are completely eradicated from the minds of people this will not be fully successful. Therefore, the Deshodaya Movement should be able

to uphold people's sovereignty through a consensual political mechanism with the absence of party politics, as shown through Deshodaya activities.

14. The steps to good governance and development with people's participation.

I. Introduction

From the first four parts of this Deshodaya publication, the prevalent issues which require focus from the individual level to the national level are identified. The methodology of how to become a part of the solution, instead of magnifying the problems, is being explained. Therefore it is evident that this is a program for all parties, from children to the elderly and from family level to the national level, allowing continuous participation. No immature political party that promises to give 'the sun and the moon and the stars in exchange for power' is present in this project. Deshodaya has launched a program which should be activated in unity by all people to save the country from the present catastrophic situation. This is not a new concept but it is only the six-fold comprehensive program that Sarvodaya has already implemented during the past 60 years, and it is only a further extension of the political and economic programs that we have proposed.

II. Realization of good governance

Various governments, private sectors and communities operate their governments and institutes under good governance and development principles that are suitable to them. What we at Deshodaya wish to develop is a system of good governance from the family to the national level in accordance with our history and the culture. The fundamental base of this good governance system is to build the social, economic and political system upon spiritual, ethical and cultural values.

In order to realize this the said good governance should be built with community participation. For it to be efficient the system should operate on different levels; namely, the first level comprising village self-

governance (Grama Swarajya, consisting of about 30,000 villages), the second level consisting of 5,000 local government units, the third level comprising of 350 divisional councils and the fourth level comprising 25 district councils, leading to the fifth level, consisting of a national governing council or a parliament.

The political leaders from the first to the fifth levels are chosen out of the community leaders who have displayed qualities of honesty, education, purity in character, commitment to social service, abilities for creative activities and selfless service. They all should be volunteers to a respectable service regardless of a pension or an emolument. Only the expenses incurred for such a service will be borne by village councils, divisional councils, district councils and the national council.

III. Formulate a new constitution based on village self-governance

The National Deshodaya Council will establish a Special Committee to gather suitable proposals from society to formulate a new constitution relevant to all community categories, within a period of one year commencing from 02nd October 2018. This Committee will consider all prevalent situations in the country and with due consideration to all proposals received up to now, will present a new constitution to the people. This constitution will consist of sections dealing with five levels: namely, village level, divisional level, local government level, district level, and national level. The Deshodaya Council will publicize the draft of this new constitution on 02nd October 2019. Thereafter the Deshodaya Council shall publicize the methodology to adopt the new constitution of the Republic of Sri Lanka.

IV. Let's recognize the welfare areas that should be given preference

The poor sections of the society will receive preference under the good governance system. Through projects benefiting the last considered community category, within two years poverty will be eradicated completely. This doesn't mean making the poor wealthy, but building a society free of poverty.

Secondly, prominence will be given to children, infants, the unborn, and all below 18 years of age – to develop their nutrition level, education level, health and personality.

Thirdly, focus will be turned towards providing welfare to helpless women and the elderly. Apart from this, welfare will also be provided to the physically, mentally and socially handicapped.

In fourth place, as an urgent project, the attention of people and the government should be directed to immediately commence a welfare program to families and people who lost their lives or became seriously ill due to consuming polluted water and chemically contaminated food.

V. Let's convert development into a total development

According to the Deshodaya philosophy, development is not limited to the material world. It is of paramount importance to develop the spiritual, ethical, cultural and social aspects as well. We have already presented much information on these four aspects. Stated below are some areas of focus from a physical perspective.

A) A national list of political and economic principles will be brought to peoples' attention by the Deshodaya Council, coded under the guidance of a national board of scholars.

B) Based on these principles a national scheme to be operated through village levels, divisional levels, district levels, national levels and international levels will be decided upon.

C) Once those principles are accepted by the parliament which is the national government authority, the ministers and other officials who become stewards of the principles, will not be able to operate arbitrarily defying these policies.

D) The management of the development process within village and divisional levels will fall under the people's organizations and their political agents and government officials will only be required to execute the decisions.

E) The implementation of activities at district, national and international levels, based on the Code of Principles, will be undertaken only by educationally and professionally qualified government and corporate officials, with responsibility towards the Parliament. The recruitment, management and dismissal of these officials will be by a Constitutional Board appointed by the Parliament.

15. Taking the correct path beyond 2020

Deshodaya will operate continuously on the above agenda and after considering the situation of the country by the year 2019, the actions required to direct the country towards good governance and development will be decided upon, together with political and other civil society agencies who follow similar methodologies.

In conclusion, we request the youth, the university teachers and students, the school children, and all others to comprehend the prevalent realistic situation of the country, to participate together as an intelligent and an ethical community for a complete non-violent revolution to safeguard the future of our motherland.

15

Convocation Address to the Open University of Sri Lanka

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Deans and Faculty Members, New Graduates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am humbled but honored by the invitation extended to me by the Vice-Chancellor to address this august assembly. I accepted the invitation knowing well that I was going to address an audience that would mostly be composed of academics. Though I have spent some time sparingly in academic pursuits I confess that as many as six decades of my life I have continuously spent in my country and in many other countries on all continents trying to understand and learn from the poorest of the poor; how they sustain themselves and survive on this planet in spite of the almost insurmountable obstacles they have to face. I think it is most appropriate now that I turn my attention to the new graduates and share some of the lessons I learnt from these so-called depressed, powerless and lowest of the lowliest people while working with them.

Dear sisters and brothers who are getting a new academic recognition today. I offer you my congratulations and best wishes for a very happy and contented future in the service of humanity. This is an auspicious day for you to make strong resolutions. Some of you in the Open University may be already employed and may be thinking of getting promotions with the degree you have now earned. There may be others who have yet to find employment who may be thinking that with the degree you are getting today, you have better prospects of getting employed. While I do not blame you for that kind of self-centered thinking, this extraordinary day offers you a unique opportunity to make a much higher resolution which will one day make you an extraordinary human being.

Now that you have a recognized university degree you have to transcend self-centered thinking and develop a universal framework of consciousness. You should start thinking of those who never had access to even secondary education, leaving aside higher education - those communities in remote villages of this country who are denied the basic necessities such as clean water to drink, minimum clothing requirements, even one nutritious meal a day, health and medical facilities, a house to

live in, land and irrigation facilities to grow their own food, and so on. Extend your thinking beyond the shores of our country to other less fortunate people around the world. After all, in universal thinking "WE ARE ONE WORLD, ONE PEOPLE".

This kind of transformation of our consciousness from self to non-self will open up a vast realm of opportunities - to discover why all this poverty and suffering prevail amidst plenty of resources and affluence and with so much of advancement in science and technology. Once the causes are discovered, every human mind has the potential to find ways and means to remove those causes and tread a path to liberation from suffering and achieving happiness. Do not underestimate your potential to make a significant change for the better in the society you are living in.

In this brief talk especially meant for the new graduates I will leave with them ten of the challenges we are facing today as a national community and as a member of the world community of nations.

Ensuring human rights

i. Ensuring human rights to every citizen in accordance with UN Human Rights Declaration.

ii. Adhering to the principle that in a democracy the people are supreme.

iii. Providing every family with housing sanitary and health care facilities.

Ensuring freedom from corruption

i Eliminating favoritism, nepotism, bribery, corruption and waste in public and private sector organizations.

Building truly independent nation

i Building a Sri Lankan identity, which we have failed to do even after seven decades of freedom from colonial powers.

ii Safeguarding ourselves as an independent and non-aligned nation by not allowing foreign interests to blackmail us by their grants, loans and investments.

iii Ensuring that under no circumstances shall our lands, harbors, airports and other immovable national assets be mortgaged or leased for unreasonable periods of time to foreign powers.

Safeguarding our environment and ensuring our food security

i Safeguard our natural environment and ecological stability from being adversely affected by macro and mega development projects.

ii Presenting optimum forest coverage and protecting waterfalls, rivers, canals and other water resources and preventing sea erosion and desertification.

iii Achieving self-sufficiency and safety with regard to our food requirements.

Please give your deep attention to these ten challenges to which we as a people in this country have so far failed to find satisfactory solutions. If we as common people continue to remain apathetic and leave it to the politicians, bureaucrats and other vested interests, who are reaping the benefits of this situation, our children will inherit a Sri Lanka mostly dependent, divided, violent, militarized, waterless, polluted and totally immoral.

Lastly, I leave with you a few questions to think about. To what extent is the party-political system responsible for this all around degeneration of our country and society? Are political parties indispensable for democracy to function? Haven't the political parties replaced the supremacy of the people and aren't they engaged in an abuse of the power that belongs to the people? Shouldn't the educated class like you and I educate the masses and together launch a non-violent revolution to replace the

centralized party political system with a totally decentralized, community based, party-less or non-party, people's participatory system of governance or what may be called commonwealth of village (community) Republics?

Thank you.

16

Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution

16th UN Day Vesak Celebrations and Academic Conference
Vietnam

I am responding to the Most Ven. Dr. Thick Nhat Tu's invitation to send a contribution on the given subtheme of “Buddhism and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.” Though I am no expert on Buddhism or a scholar on industrial revolutions, I accepted this invitation extended to me as a practitioner of Buddha's teaching since my childhood. Besides, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement we started six decades ago in 1958, attempted to apply Buddhism to find solutions to modern day social, political and economic issues.

I was fortunate to be born into a family of Buddhists. In my country Sri Lanka, we inherited a culture that dates back to over two thousand six hundred years. My parents, specially my mother, were my primary educators to introduce age-old traditional Buddhist ideals to us. Later these values were inculcated into our personalities as life-long practices applicable to every moment of living by the learned and virtuous monks of our village temple and our school teachers.

It may be appropriate to mention one of the lessons I learnt at this point. A mosquito may land on my left hand and its bite hurts me. My right hand alights on the mosquito spontaneously. My mother sees my reaction. She calls me lovingly and makes me sit on her lap and begins to talk. “My son, look at the size of this mosquito. So tiny, you even can't see it easily. Imagine how small his brain is. Imagine how big you are and your brain compared to the mosquito. The poor pest hasn't got a developed mind to understand that it hurts you. In your case you have a very advanced mind. So, my son, remember, never to hurt even a mosquito.”

This is how my mother taught me the first precept of “abstinence from killing” and the *supremacy of the human mind*. It also should be mentioned that respect for all life and the importance of safeguarding the entire living world was inculcated into our consciousness at that blooming age. Similarly we learnt about the other four precepts, namely, abstinence from stealing, sexual Misconduct, speaking untruth and consuming intoxicants, along with many other lessons while we were still children. In

Buddhism we call these Five Precepts *Pancha Sila* which is the bare minimum of moral principles needed for the progress of a civilized and peaceful society. My personal belief is that it is the non-adherence to this bare minimum of moral principles by leaders at local, national and international levels which has led to the misery, conflicts and chaos of today's world.

Pancha Sila is the bare minimum of Buddhist practice for lay disciples. Building on the *Pancha Sila,* Buddhism indicates a very clear program not only for the further development of individuals, but also for the "welfare of the many" and the material development of individuals, families, groups, organizations and states. One is free to choose the path one may take at a pace one may also choose. Though there are many possible paths, all of them can be subsumed under three main teachings of the Buddha. They are as follow:

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS *(Chaturaryasatya)*

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH *(Aryaastangikamarga)*

THE THEORY OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION (*Paticca Samuppada Dhamma)*

Looking at the past, the present and considering the future of the world, I do not think that there is any scientific discovery or technological innovation done during the last 2,600 years comparable to the enunciation and exposition of the above teachings. Please allow me to expand on the above salient teachings for the benefit of those who may not be Buddhists.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Four Noble Truths constitute the Buddhist analysis of life. It reveals the real status of life as "being unsatisfactory" in that whoever we are, we are subject to illness, decay, death, separation from loved ones, association with those whom we dislike, etc. No one is exempt from this,

neither the richest nor the poorest, neither the most powerful nor the weakest, etc. This is the First Noble Truth in brief. Buddhists refer to this as the *Noble Truth of Suffering.*

The Second Noble Truth states the Cause for this "unsatisfactory state". It is not due to any materialistic, or physical reason outside of "us", but due to the operation of "Greed", "Hatred" and "Ignorance" within "us". The "ignorance" referred to is the ignorance of the "Four Noble Truths." Buddhists refer to this as the *Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering.*

The Third Noble Truth gives hope to one in that it states that it is possible to escape this recurring cycle of "being unsatisfactory." Buddhists refer to this as the *Noble Truth of the Eradication of Suffering.*

The Fourth Noble Truth indicates the path one should take to permanently leave this "unsatisfactory state". Buddhists refer to this path as the *Noble Eightfold Path.*

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH.

This is a path which is open to any human being to follow; the *Noble Truth of the Path to the Eradication of Suffering*. Many in this audience and outside are most certainly following this path either knowingly or unknowingly. Many who followed this Path in the Buddha's time were not Buddhists as such. The Path is best understood in three segments as follows.

> *Right Speech, Right Endeavour, Right Livelihood (Abstaining from all evils) which leads to Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration (Cultivating the good) which leads to Right View and Right Understanding.*

THE THEORY OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION (Patticca Sammuppada Dhamma)

The Noble Eightfold Path is the one to be followed diligently by any one who wishes to be free from this "unsatisfactory state" or suffering. But this

is exactly what many of us fail to do. We know what is “right” but most of the time we do what is “not right”. What we practice is not the Noble Eightfold Path but its opposite, namely, the Ignoble Eightfold Path of Wrong Speech, Wrong Endeavour, Wrong Livelihood, Wrong Effort, Wrong Mindfulness, Wrong Concentration, Wrong View and Wrong Understanding.

In the theory of Dependent Origination, the Buddha provides an explanation of how this can happen. If we know “how”, then we have the potential to arrest the operation of the Ignoble Eightfold Path and get on to the Noble Eightfold Path, not all at once but gradually.

The theory of Dependent Origination is a chain of twelve factors with each factor building on the previous one for its existence, hence the name “Dependent Origination”. Each one of the twelve links, starting with IGNORANCE and ending with SUFFERING is necessary for the subsequent one to exist. If IGNORANCE is eliminated then each subsequent factor is also eliminated ending in the elimination of SUFFERING.

IGNORANCE (*Avijja*) is ignorance of impermanence, suffering and non-self (*Anicca, Dukka, Anatta*) which leads to volitional formations (*Sankhara*), leading to consciousness (*Vinnana*), leading to name and form (*Namarupa*), leading to six sensory organs (*Salayathana*), leading to contact (*Passa*), leading to thirst (*Vedana*), leading to craving (*Thanha*), leading to clinging *(Upadana*), leading to cycle of births and deaths *(Bhava*), leading to birth (*Jathi)*, leading to old age, disease and death etc. (*Jara, Marana, Soka, Parideva, Dukka, Domanassa).*

Avijja is a distorted understanding of how things work; a delusion arising from the operation of the Five Hindrances (*Panca Nivarana),* which are: Desire for Sense Objects (*Kamachchanda*), Ill Will *(Vyapada),* Sloth and Torpor (*Tina, Midda*), Restlessness and Worry (*Uddacca Kukkuka*), and Doubt (*Vici kicca*). If the Hindrances are weakened, the lesser is the Suffering.

Having very concisely introduced certain basic principles of Buddhist teachings we follow, let me now turn to the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" and how it could be related to Buddhism in view of "Global Leadership and Shared Responsibilities for Sustainable Societies" which is the main theme of this conference.

The phrase "Fourth Industrial Revolution" was introduced by Klaus Schwab, the executive chairman of the World Economic Forum based in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, in 2015. In October 2016 at a meeting of this Forum, it was decided to open a center in San Francisco to serve as a platform for interaction, insight and impact on the scientific and technological changes that are changing the way we live, work and relate to one another. This is a welcome opportunity for Buddhist Scholars and leaders to actively participate in shaping the direction this fourth industrial revolution should take. This opportunity should not be missed by leaders of nations such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, China and Japan, who have inherited a Buddhist culture. They should guide those at the San Francisco Center to follow the Buddhist path to Global Leadership, Shared Responsibilities and Sustainable Societies by developing and applying appropriate and relevant technologies that are harmless. In the words of Schwab himself, "There has never been a time of greater promise, or one of greater potential peril."

From the 18th to 19th centuries in Europe and North America, mostly agrarian and rural societies got transformed into industrial and urban societies. The main roles were played by steam and water power and iron and textile industries. This was the first industrial revolution. During the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century, the use of electricity for mass production in existing industries as well as new ones such as steel and oil heralded the second industrial revolution. It was during this period that major technological advances were made for wide use of telephones, phonograph, electric lighting and internal combustion engines. The third

industrial revolution began around the 1980s, with digital technology, and continues to this day. It is during this period that we started using personal computers, the internet, and other information and communication technologies.

The fourth industrial revolution, according to Schwab and others, is being built on the digital revolution, and by "emerging technology breakthrough in a number of fields, including robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing, biotechnology, The Internet of Things, Blockchain, 3D Printing and autonomous vehicles." So the fourth industrial revolution, in their own words "will make ways in which technology becomes embedded within societies and even the human body."

Having described very briefly the four industrial revolutions that impacted on our society in the past three centuries and are affecting our human society and the planet even today, it is time we pay attention to the role Buddhism, which survived for over twenty-six centuries and the role it should play in relation to the present and future societies human beings are attempting to build applying these new technologies.

At the inception of this paper I mentioned the deep respect for all life we have to cultivate as Buddhists. Similarly I spoke about the importance of adhering to a minimum of five precepts to live a peaceful and happy life. I then described how a human being strives to awaken his personality to the fullest by extending the practice of *Sila, Samadhi and Pragna*. When we compare this Buddhist approach to the way western science and technology developed, it had no moral or spiritual foundation to conform to, or a spiritual goal to aspire for. It was free to pursue research for universal knowledge and develop numerous technologies one may use either for the betterment of oneself or the annihilation of one's enemies, irrespective of its positive or negative impact on the broader society. Their main objective was craving for wealth or power or to satisfy the six senses. Beyond that materialistic desire there was no other spiritual ideal to look for in both research and application.

Who gained from the past three industrial revolutions? Certainly, they were not the people in general or those who deserved it the most. On the contrary from all these revolutions the wealthy, the ruling classes, industrialists, multinational investors, imperial powers and such other privileged classes benefited while the farmers, labourers, small landholders and non-professional masses suffered.

“The richest 1% of the population now owns over half of all household wealth.” *(Source: Credit Suisse's Global Wealth Report 2015.)* Oxfam's new report presents an even more dramatic concentration of assets, finding that 62 individuals controlled more assets than the poorer 3.6 billion people combined, who constitute half the world's population.

Whatever the damage done to poorer communities in the world, especially to those who were under western imperialistic powers in the past like those of us in Sri Lanka and Vietnam, and the present neo-colonialist ways in which our economies are controlled by rich countries and multinational corporations, we still have to view the future realistically. We have to clearly identify the positive aspects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and develop a common approach for the world to follow based on Buddhist principles and practice which will result in the wellbeing of all humans and also ensure the preservation of all life on this planet. We have to keep in mind the Buddha's directive to the first sixty enlightened disciples (*Arahats*) he sent out to the world to teach his Dhamma: “Bhikkhus, wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the many, for the compassionate assistance of the world.”

In this spirit Buddhists, both clergy and laity, have a great responsibility to re-educate the world as to how best we can remove inequalities, injustices and ignorance from human society which originated right from the first, second and third industrial revolutions. There are communities in the world who are still living in the pre-industrial age. The vast majority of communities have yet to experience the second and third industrial revolutions. If the Buddhist ideal of serving humans, other forms of animals, the plant kingdom and nature as a whole is truly practiced in the

new industrial era that has begun, the past mistakes can be rectified. It is possible to bypass or leapfrog the first two or three phases and straight away help the weak and poor communities enter the fourth phase with a chosen mix of technology to deal with predetermined issues such as mass scale poverty, disease and social conflicts, if only those who are in control of technology are educated in Buddhist teachings of Loving Kindness (*Metta*), Compassionate Action (*Karuna*), Dispassionate Joy *(Muditha*) and Equanimity *(Upekkha).*

Buddhist practitioners have the great responsibility of engaging themselves in a global survey to identify communities who have to be immediately helped using appropriate technologies that are available to us. All this becomes possible only if a universal transformation of human consciousness is launched successfully. At the present moment Buddhists have easy access to the communication technologies which can initiate and accelerate this renewal. Only when a critical mass of such consciousness transformation occurs, will people begin to think and question certain commonly accepted beliefs and practices. Their greed will be replaced with giving or charity (dana).

In my opinion we have to first identify those relevant technologies which could be used for such a global consciousness shift by Buddhists. Secondly we have to identify the issues that have to be immediately dealt with in relation to the vast majority of people in the world who are struggling to survive without even having enough to eat. Thirdly we have to develop a clear perception as to how these technologies and their applications will affect the life support systems and the conservation of nature and secure the living world from disasters like the worsening climate changes and overall global warming.

For a moment let us look at the materially advanced societies like Japan in our region, and how technological advances affected their individual, family and community lives. In these so called highly advanced societies, the suicide rate is said to be the highest in the region. Interpersonal relationships have become so distanced and estranged that an individual

no longer can turn to his or her parents, elders or the community for advice and help. The inbuilt value systems that prevailed in the pre-industrial society are no longer there. The human personality is lost in a barren desert of dumb technological gadgets and networks. In this kind of helpless situation, mental disorders are on the increase in the same way as suicides. Human beings almost from the adolescent age have no vision in life to live for. Besides endless gratification of the six sense faculties, they hardly have any other reason to live.

On the positive side we are aware that these technological industrial revolutions have brought about numerous benefits to ordinary populations as well, even though most of the benefits were acquired by the privileged classes and countries. Depending on the governance and economic systems, common people have got the freedom to access the best of health care, medical treatments, educational opportunities and other forms of services such as in the areas of travel, leisure and entertainment to live a comfortable and happy life. Humanity from its inception has been cursed by famine, disease and violence. The industrial revolutions along with advancement of democratic governing systems are successfully combating these three evils.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that 'the right to life' is the most fundamental value of humanity. Various UN bodies like FAO, WHO and the Security Council along with other intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations have immensely contributed to save human lives from these three enemies. Yet we have a long way to go before we can say that humanity as a whole is free from hunger and disease. In the case of violence and war, the very advancements made in nuclear weaponry have led those who possess them to refrain from confrontations because of mutual fear and instead resort to peaceful negotiations to resolve their conflicts. On the other hand, individual and group violence are on the increase due to various social factors such as poverty, communalism, and ideological and racial rivalries.

With support from billionaires, bankers, and dictators who wish to be immortal, scientific researchers are exploring ways to remain young without getting old or dying. They are very serious about it and some have publicly declared that by 2050 they can overcome death. While a few of them who never stop craving for more and more will continue on pursuits like that, we should concentrate on a selective application of a mix of available technologies to show the world the path of Buddhism for all those who are yet to satisfy their basic human needs, and for others who do not find happiness in all the material affluence they have acquired from the industrial revolutions. There is no doubt that the vast majority of human beings will consider the Middle Path (*Majjima Patipada*) or the Noble Eightfold Path to be a sensible way of life to meet the present-day challenges.

The Buddha's advice to the monks was as follows:

“Monks, this life of human beings is short; one must pass on to the future life. You should reflect wisely, do good, and live a pure life (*brahmacharya*). One born cannot avoid death; one who lives long lives a hundred years or a fraction more.”

“Short is the life span of human beings, The good man should disdain it. You should live like one with head aflame. No one can avoid death's arrival”

According to the *Dhammapada* a collection of sayings of the Buddha in verse form and one of the most widely read and best-known Buddhist scriptures “Mind precedes all phenomena. Mind is their chief; they are all mind-wrought. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him like his never-departing shadow”

In the *Dhammapada* we also come across the following stanza:

Arōgyā paramā lābhā
santutthiparamamdhanan
vissāsaparamā nāthi
Nibbānanparamamsukhan

The meaning of this stanza is:

"*Health is the ultimate profit, contentment is the ultimate wealth, trust is the best relative, Nibbana is the ultimate bliss*".

Buddhism is not a religion as such. It is an explanation of the human personality in relation to the rest of the living world, and a time frame in which there is no beginning or end. If the stake holders of the fourth industrial revolution examine the teachings of the Buddha in the above four spheres of health, contentment, trust and bliss from a scientific viewpoint, certainly immensely good results could be achieved for humanity as a whole. There are diseases which are the result of the polluted air we breathe, the chemically poisonous food and the unhealthy drinks we consume, all of which are by products of these so-called revolutions. The kind of entertainment to which our eyes and ears and all other faculties of our bodies are tuned, and the endless possessions our minds crave takes good health and inner peace away from us. Buddhism shows us to place confidence or trust in the Dhamma for the good of present life and for lives to come.

Sadly, with the onset of new techniques, systems and disciplines, the very structures of biological organisms are now being modified by the sophisticated manipulation of individual genes. This has resulted in manipulating the very codes of life, and thereby giving rise to the likelihood of creating entirely new realities for humanity as a whole. According to Buddhism, there are five Cosmic Laws or natural processes (Niyamas) which operate in the physical and mental realms, and which should not be meddled with. The Buddha taught us that these five factors at work in the cosmos cause things to happen. They are :

Bija Niyama: Cosmic Law pertaining to genetic order, living matter, or what we call biology. Bija Niyam governs plant life, germs, seeds and the nature of all life, plant and animal.

Utu Niyama: Cosmic Law pertaining to seasons, climatic cycles, weather and all inorganic phenomena. Natural disasters such as earthquakes,

tsunamis and cyclones are not caused by Karmic factors.

Kamma Niyama: Cosmic Law pertaining to Kamma (Karma in Sanskrit) is the law of moral influence, cause and effect.

Dhamma Niyama: Cosmic Law pertaining to the twelve factors of Dependent Origination; impermanence, suffering, egolessness, and such other phenomena .

Citta Niyama: Cosmic Law pertaining to consciousness, thoughts and perceptions.

I wish the scientists took time to study these five cosmic laws before they started experimenting with genes and cloning, either naturally or artificially. Only then would they realize the degree of damage caused to humanity. At times I wonder whether all these advancements contribute to the degeneration of our historic, intellectual and cultural roots on which our civilization was built.

The Buddha declared that his teachings are not for the ignorant. Buddha Dhamma is meant for intelligent and wise people. It is not like all forms of technological advancements which produce mass scale goods and services to quench the unending desires of human beings, corporations, governments and other organized bodies. Buddha Dhamma is principally meant for those who want to spend a happy and contented life in the present existence and strive heedlessly to achieve the supreme happiness of Nibbana.

In conclusion, I believe that Buddhists have a critical role to play in propagating the real Dhamma. Buddhists around the world should use every possible communication methodology to educate the masses to apply the principles of Buddha's teachings. Sutras like the *Mahamangala Sutra, Karaneeya Sutra,* and *Singalovada Sutra* must be made available in all possible languages. Similarly, industrialists and businessmen should be made familiar with Sutras like the *Vyagga Pajja Sutra* which explains four principles they should follow for right kind of business and industry.

They are: efficiency in production (*Uttana Sammapada*), conservation with regard to raw material as well as the products (*Arakka Sampada*), social environment in which employers and employees live in harmony (*Kalyanamittata*) and the purpose for which production is made (*Samajeevakata*).

With regard to rulers it is necessary to educate them about Buddhist principles of sharing of power (*Dana*), morality (*Sila*), recognition and promotion of talent (*Pariccaga*), uprightness (*Ajjava*), impartiality in judgment (*Majjavam*), composure in conduct (*Tapam*), non-hatred (*Akkodo*), non-violence (*Avihinsa*), patience and forgiveness (*Khanti*) and non-revengefulness (*Avirodhita*).

The Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and the twelve factors of the Theory of Dependent Origination cannot be realized with any technological gadgets or tools of Artificial Intelligence, but only by a highly cultivated and enlightened mind. Only enlightened communities, leaders and rulers can bring true peace, happiness and prosperity to the humanity and the rest of the living world.

17

“We Build the road, the Road Builds Us” Through shared labor, a unique Sri Lankan movement seeks not only material improvement but true development of the spirit,

I stood under a scorching August sun atop a 30- foot embankment near the village of Kirulutuwa in northern Sri Lanka. At the base of the embankment, a reconstructed catchment basin still held some precious water – even though it was near the end of the region's eight-month dry season. " For two years" said a villager, " the tank has not dried up. It gets low, but there is always some water.

Kitulutuwa's tank, part of an ancient water system which deteriorated under British rule was re constructed by more than 600 volunteers, Students, villagers from other districts, clerical workers, government officials, police officers and shopkeepers all contributed manual labor in an extraordinary movement called Sarvodaya Shramadana "The awakening of all through shared labor"

The movement was born in 1958 when a Colombo high school science teacher. A.T. Ariyaratne, led an expedition of Students and teaches from a prestigious Buddhist pre- school in to the low-caste, poverty-stricken, village of Kanatholuwa to dig latrines, gardens and roads. Since then about two million Sri Lankans have volunteered for Sarvodaya work. Almost 4000 villages, or one of every four in this island nation, have been touched by Sarvodaya.

Before the tank reconstruction began in Kitulutuwa, a Sarvodaya field worker visited the village. he asked the residents what project would most improve their lot. Unaccustomed to being asked what they wanted, the people of Kitulutuwa were skeptical, but they told the fieldworker about the rank and work on it soon began.

Once the tank was finished, Sarvodaya staff members continued to work with the villagers. A village Re-awakening Society was formed, and through cooperative planning the village spring was improved and a preschool center built and staffed. A mothers' group was formed, and the farmers learned to collaborate in solving their problems.

During any project, volunteers and villagers meet three times a week to discuss progress and problems. In these "Family Gatherings" Sarvodaya

veterans talk of the four Buddhist principles that, according to Ariyaratne, “from the basis of our rural culture” Metta”, loving kindness, Karuna, compassionate action, “Mudhithia” unselfish joy: and “Upekkha”, equanimity. Once a month they congregate to sing, recite and perform, traditional Sri Lankan dances that relate moral tales of rural life.

Thousands of development projects are presently underway throughout Sri Lanka. As we talked of the changes in Kitulutuwa volunteers were helping to cut by hand a three-mile road near the village of Baddegama. Villagers near the upland city of Kandy were meeting Sarvodaya staff to reach a consensus about building a new water pipeline. The movement supports research into appropriate technology, disseminates information and operates programs in nutrition, mother-and child health, agricultural education and training in trades and the management of small business. It has also developed small scale industries-soap manufacture, brickyards, the construction of truck trailers and cooperative shops.

During Sarvodaya's first 14 years, Ariyaratne ran the movement with his own money in his spare time. When he won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership in 1969, foreign developments agencies began to seek his advice. In the early 1970s, Ariyaratne was able to expand his activities with the help of foreign donation.

On a recent visit to Sarvodaya's headquarters in the coastal city of Moratuwa near Colombo, I spoke with “Ari” about Sarvodaya's work. A small, silver-haired man, he takes special pleasure in stories that points up the fallibility of experts and the wisdom of the people;” I proposed that we build up a village aftr a cyclone with just Sarvodaya people, no engineers. The government agent said this would be slower than using machinery. I organized a team of masons and carpenters, ordinary people, then put a boy in charge. Just a boy, but he had the common touch. What is needed always is someone with the common touch. Indeed, that is the way Ari sees himself.” I am just a rustic villager thinking out loud about development, “ he often says.

But Ari not only emphasizes the usefulness of development “from the bottom up” he also turns ordinary development criteria up side down. True development does not end with the satisfaction of basic material needs, he argues, Spiritual growth should be the growing experience of development. “In working at Shramadana projects, we develop our spirits. “says Ari. “We build the road, the road build us”

Naturally, a movement that has mobilized so many hundreds of thousands of unskilled villagers cannot always function smoothly. In Sarvodaya's early days some workers were trained in skills neither useful in there villages nor immediately marketable outside them. Moreover, in attempting to “ harmonize and work in close cooperation with “ the government's national development efforts, Savodaya has on occasion unwittingly disregarded grass-roots interests.

I visited a housing project in the inhospitable jungle of northern Sri Lanka. Modern cement and tile dwellings had been built for 12 aboriginal families, farming people accustomed to thatched houses. But they were living beside their new houses, not in them. When I asked who had built the houses for them, the people pointed to my Sarvodaya companions and said. “ the government.”

Despite in problems, Sarvodaya's measurable results, particularly in agricultural production., have impressed development experts from abroad. “ The example of Sarvodaya allows one to think that perhaps the problem of hunger can be solved. “ says political scientist Ruth S. Morgenthau , former United States Representative to the United Nations Commission on Social Development.

By allying itself with the rural poor of Sri Lanka, Sarvodaya has made small-farmer aid, long an elusive goal of development agencies. seem feasible . An international committee headed by Ruth Morgenthau and including A.T. Ariyaratne has begun to launch a number of grassroots agricultural projects in the Sabel, Tanzania and Zimbabwe- projects drawing on the experience of Sarvodaya. That committee , under the name 'Food Corps”

will help ascertain what lessons from Sarvodaya's experience can be applied elsewhere in the world.

A movement that has surprised developed and developing countries with so much solid achievement can surely help to prompt initiatives in other settings. The meaning of Sarvodaya is just beginning to be explored.

18

Religious perspective on Pandemic and Human Suffering

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement we started six decades ago in 1958, attempted to apply Buddha Dhamma to find solutions to modern day social, political and economic issues. I was fortunate to be born into a family of Buddhists. In my country Sri Lanka, we had inherited a culture that was influenced by the Buddha Dhamma dates back into over two thousand six hundred years. My parents, specially my mother, were my primary educators to introduce aged old traditional Buddhist ideals to us. Later these values were inculcated into our personalities as life-long practices applicable to every moment of living by the learned and virtuous monks of our village temple and the school teachers.

From a Buddhist perspective, as long as we are in this cycle of births and deaths, we cannot put an end to suffering. Therefore, by a process of developing self-discipline, mindfulness and concentration, we can strive to attain the bliss of Nirvana. The Covid-19 pandemic is one of those very mild occurrences compared to the endless suffering we are subjected to as long as we are in this cycle of births and deaths.

Buddhism is based on a solid foundation of *Sila* or Morality. If we are to be true Buddhists, we have to at best follow five precepts irrespective of all confines. It may be appropriate to mention one of those lessons I learnt at this point. A mosquito may land on my left hand and its bite hurts me. My right hand alights on the mosquito spontaneously. My mother sees my reaction. She calls me lovingly and makes me sit on her lap and begins to talk. “My son, look at the size of this mosquito. So tiny you even can't see it easily. Imagine how small his brain is. Imagine how big you are and your brain compared to the mosquito. The poor pest hasn't got a developed mind to understand that it hurts you. In your case you have a very advanced mind. So, my son remember, never to hurt even a mosquito”.

This is how my mother taught me the first precept of “Abstinence from Killing”. It also should be mentioned that respect for all life and the importance of safeguarding all was inculcated into our consciousness at that blooming age. Similarly, we learnt about the other four precepts, namely, Abstinence from Stealing, Sexual Misconduct, Speaking Untruth

and Consuming Intoxicants while we were still children. In Buddhism we call these Five Precepts *PanchaSila* which is the bare minimum of five moral principles needed for the progress of a civilized and peaceful society. My personal belief is that without these five principles being strictly adhered to by leaders and included in development plans, humanity will drift towards greater chaos.

The ***Dhammapada*** is a collection of sayings of the Buddha in verse form and one of the most widely read and best known Buddhist scriptures. In the Dhammapada we come across the following stanza:

Arogyaparamalabha
santutthiparamamdhanam
vissasaparama nati
nibbanamparamamsukham.

Health is the ultimate profit, contentment is the greatest wealth, a trusted friend is the best relative, Nibbana is the greatest bliss.

If the stake holders of the Covid Pandemic examine the teachings of the Buddha in the above four spheres of health, contentment, trust and bliss from a scientific viewpoint, certainly immense good results could be achieved for humanity as a whole. There are diseases which are the result of polluted air we breathe, chemicalized food and unhealthy drinks we consume, all of which are by products of the so-called industrial and economic development. Kind of entertainment to which our eyes and ears and all other faculties of our bodies are tuned to and endless possessions our mind's crave takes good health and inner peace away from us. Buddhism shows us to place confidence or trust in the Dhamma for the good of present life and lives to come.

Sadly, with the onset of the new techniques, systems and disciplines the very structures of biological organisms is now brought to the sophisticated level of individual genes. This has resulted in manipulating the very codes of life, thereby giving rise to the likelihood of creating entirely new phenomena for humanity as a whole. According to

Buddhism, there are five cosmic laws or processes (Niyamas) which operate in the physical and mental realms. They are:

Bija Niyama Cosmic law pertaining to genes.

Utu Niyama Cosmic law pertaining to seasons

Kamma Niyama Cosmic law pertaining to Kamma (*Karma in Sanskrit*) cause and effect.

Citta Niyama Cosmic law pertaining to consciousness.

Dhamma Niyama Cosmic law pertaining to natural phenomena.

I wish the scientists not only in Wuhan [China] but also spread across the world, found time to study these five Cosmic Laws before they started experimenting with genes and cloning either naturally or artificially. Only then they would have realized the degree of damage caused to humanity by their experimentation. At times I wonder whether all these advancements contribute to the degeneration of our historic, intellectual and cultural roots on which our civilization was built.

Buddhism clearly teaches us of the cycle of births and deaths which is endless. Right through this million and billions of lives both human and other living forms, **suffering** is a result one cannot escape.

Suffering comes in many forms. Birth, old age, death, partying from the beloved, not being able to amass what one desires, being subjected to unpleasant experiences etc is classified as suffering. In other words, all five aggregates namely Body (*Rupa*) Sensations (*Vedana*) Perception (*Sanna*) Volitions (*Sankara*) and Consciousness (*Vinnana*) are suffering.

While keeping in mind this ultimate objective of ending 'Samsaric Suffering', we can successfully handle the Covid-19 pandemic if we follow the Noble Eightfold Path advocated by the Buddha.

The **Noble Eightfold Path** is an early summary of the path of Buddhist practices leading to liberation from samsra, the painful cycle of rebirth.

The Eightfold Path consists of eight practices:

Right understanding (*Sammaditthi)*
Right thought (*Sammasankappa*)
Right speech (*Sammavaca*)
Right action (*Sammakammanta*)
Right livelihood (*Sammaajiva*)
Right effort (*Sammavayama*)
Right mindfulness (*Samma sati*)
Right concentration (*Samma samadhi*)

The core teachings of the Buddha, is entirely based on this path. The Buddha disclosed the path in many different approaches and in distinct words and ways to many different individuals, families and communities according to each one's capacity to understand Dhamma. A situation like Covid pandemic would not have occurred had governments, institutions and individuals followed the practice of Right Livelihood.

Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh wrote,

"To practice Right Livelihood (*sammaajiva*), you have to find a way to earn your living without transgressing your ideals of love and compassion. The way you support yourself can be an expression of your deepest self, or it can be a source of suffering for you and others. " ... Our vocation can nourish our understanding and compassion, or erode them. We should be awake to the consequences, far and near, of the way we earn our living." (*The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching* [Parallax Press, 1998], p. 104)

Right livelihood simply means that one should abstain from making one's living through a line of work that brings harm to individuals or the society, such as dealing in arms and destructive weapons, intoxicating alcohol, killing animals, cheating, sexual misconduct and polluting the environment etc.One must always engage in professions that are harmless to others.

In a human society where we have completely discarded even the thought of right livelihood, pandemics like Covid 19 is inevitable. Sadly, the ones who suffer and vulnerable due to gross ignorance of leaders and decision makers of powerful nations are those who are marginalized and oppressed segment of the society. When we compare Buddhist approach to the way western sciences and technological advancements it is evident that it had no moral or spiritual foundation to conform to. It was free to pursue research for a universal knowledge and develop numerous technologies one may use for betterment or annihilation of the society. Yet, majority of research objectives were to satisfy the six senses. Beyond that materialistic desire there was no other spiritual ideal to look for in both research and application. Covid 19 is a clear result of ignorant nature of human beings controlled by governments craving for power and possession.

Whatever the damage done to poorer and emerging communities in the world, like those of us in Sri Lanka and India, we still have to view the future realistically. We have to clearly identify the positive aspects of the Buddha's teachings to follow, which will result in the wellbeing of all humans and also ensure the preservation of all life on this planet. We have to keep in mind the Buddha's directive to the first sixty enlightened disciple (*Arahats*) He sent out to the world to teach His Dhamma. “Bhikkus, wander forth for the welfare and happiness of the many, for the compassionate assistance of the world.”

In this spirit Buddhists both clergy and lay have a great responsibility to re-educate the world as to how best we can remove inequalities, injustices and ignorance from human society. If the Buddhist ideal of serving humans, other forms of animals, plant kingdom and nature as a whole is truly practiced by the powerful nations, the past mistakes can be rectified.

The most powerful countries in the world like U. S. A., Germany and France are still struggling to put an end to this calamity caused by an unseen and uncontrollable virus. Therefore, looking at the situation from a Buddhist perspective, we must give priority to an inner awakening

process. If there is a way where the grassroots communities could be educated, organized, and equipped to fight this virus there is a greater chance of success. In Sri Lanka, in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, we spend our time, energy and resources in organizing and strengthening rural communities to protect themselves both physically and spiritually.

Buddhist practitioners have a great responsibility of engaging themselves in a global survey of communities who have to be immediately helped using appropriate technologies that are available to us. All this become possible if only a universal scale transformation of human consciousness is launched successfully. At the present moment Buddhists have easy access to the communication technologies which can initiate and accelerate this renewal. When a critical mass of such consciousness transformation occurs only, people will begin to think and question certain commonly accepted beliefs and practices.

In my opinion we have to first identify those relevant technologies which could be used for such a global consciousness shift advocated by the Buddha. Secondly, we have to identify the issues that have to be immediately dealt with in relation to the Covid 19 virus. Vast majority of people in the world who are struggling to survive without even having enough to eat and lack of access to medicine. With the help of affluent countries,we have to develop a clear strategy as to how best we can use these technologies and their applications effectively in life support systems and the conservation of nature and secure the living world from disasters.

May all being be well and happy!!

Dr. A T Ariyaratne,
Founder, Sarvodaya Movement of Sri Lanka,
2020 October
atariyaratne@gmail.com

So many of us around the world have been inspired and had our lives permanently altered by the profound example of Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne. The organization he founded in 1958, the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka, continues to evolve and unleash the creative energies of millions of people to overcome their own poverty, build peace and steward the natural environment.

Ari's motto - "we build the road and the road builds us" - is a truth that applies as well to engaging citizens in local governance, running development finance institutions and mitigating COVID-19 as it does to actually picking up a shovel and building a road. It applies to us individually, contributing to our own spiritual and moral integrity and giving meaning to our life through compassionate action. And, more importantly, it applies to us collectively - as a community in right-relationship with one another and with our natural environment.

It is a blessing to all us at Sarvodaya USA to celebrate Ari as he enters his 90th year.

I thank you Yamuna Balasooriya to invite me to write cover back page.

John Coonrod, PhD. Chair.

ISBN 978-955-599-513-9